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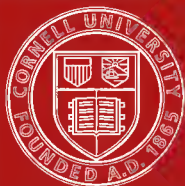
COTHURNUS & LYRE

E. J. HARDING.



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COTHURNUS AND LYRE.

BY

EDWARD J. HARDING.



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1878.

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WILLIAM J. HARDING.

CHARLES P. BULL.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE contents of this little volume are the work of a young English book-keeper at present residing in New York, and were composed in the scanty leisure of his evenings and early mornings.

NEW YORK, *November* 23, 1877.

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PROLOGUE.

THIS is my heart, O Sybaritic world !
Will't please you to behold it, masters mine ?
Marry, 'tis not so luscious as a peach,
Nor hath it the fine flavor of your pippin—
'Tis in the wrong for that ; I cry you mercy !
But these same cursèd Muses, look you, friends,
When they do love a man, why, they will use him
(Saving your presence) as the vampires would ;
And many a time beneath the stony stars
When you, fair sirs, are sleeping sound abed,
They circumcise his heart and quaff his blood,
And lash him with a scourge of knotty rhymes
About his garret until morning bares
Her bosoms rosy-budded, golden-girt,
That you, sweet souls, may have a simple song
Served with your breakfast. He nor peace of mind
Nor woman's love, nor necessary friends,
Nor any hope of mortal happiness
May long enjoy ; the Furies at his hearth
Sit uninvited ; to his grave he goes,
Hanged with a halter of his own harp-strings !
Wherefore it comes, good friends, this heart of mine
Hath lost his early bloom and springtide smell ;
'Twill none the less serve for a little sport.
So please you, I will be your worships' guide
Over the surface of this microcosm :
I am familiar with it—give me leave.
This ugly hole was cloven by a girl

To fill the leisure of a summer's day ;
It aches a little sometimes even yet :
'Tis at your service—probe it with your fingers—
Ay ! ay ! you hurt me !—you are welcome, sirs ;
I wait upon your pleasure—spare not me !—
Here is another seam, black as a coal ;
That is your work, my fair and gentle world ;
And this long fissure like a scarlet thread
My proper hands did rend, and not another's.

Puny and paltry, scarred and marred, you see ;
The worms have pierced it like your honeycomb ;
But yet it hath one virtue ; mark, my masters !
We poets groan in music ; crush our hearts
(As you would crush the roses for their scent)
And they shall pour you a full flask of song :
Now try the spell upon this rusticoat ;
Squeeze it—an ode !—pray you, again,—a satire !
'Mass, and I told you true ! would for your sakes
That I could wail you more melodiously ;
But pray content you ! what I can, I will ;
I'll go acquire the true Italian measure
To antic my despair in better time ;
Till when, forgive me of your courtesy.

Now throw the bauble to the whistling winds !
You are aweary, and it is not meet
That you should soil your excellent white hands
With such a butcher's toy ; pah ! the blood reeks !
Out on't—the dogs will find it soon enough !

MAY 26, 1877.

ERNEST.

Cui vitam pariter et mortem

Dedit Melancholia.—BURTON'S EPITAPH.

CHARACTERS.

ERNEST FORTESCUE, country gentleman.

JOSEPH LORIMER, his cousin, heir to his estates.

OWEN STUCKEY, student of medicine and the sciences.

CARROLL, retired merchant, guardian to EVA.

JOHN, gardener to CARROLL.

PETER PAUL JEROME, cook to FORTESCUE.

EVA TREVELYAN, betrothed to ERNEST.

ADA, daughter to CARROLL.

AGNES, former servant to FORTESCUE.

MARY, servant to CARROLL.

FISHERMAN, SERVANTS, GUESTS, etc.

The scene is laid at a seaside village in the west of England, and the
action passes in the present Victorian age.

COTHURNUS AND LYRE.

ERNEST.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Sea-beach, at the foot of a semicircle of cliffs: time, early evening. Enter OWEN and ADA, from opposite sides.*

OWEN. Whither so fast this fine evening, Miss Carroll?

ADA. What, Mr. Stuckey, is it you? you are well met, sir—I was longing for a pair of ears to pour my sorrows into. That tiresome papa of mine has been lecturing me again; he has such old-fashioned notions of decorum that it's positively an anachronism to listen to him; I can't conceive where he picked them up—not from me, I'm sure—I hate decorum from the bottom of my heart.

OWEN. Fathers, my dear Miss Ada, are an eccentric species; it is impossible to differentiate and define them like other animals; one never knows where to have them. But after all, they serve a useful purpose in the order of creation, you know.

ADA. I admit it; they are wanted to pay their daughters' bills; but then they should confine themselves to their duties, and not forget their station so far as to reprimand their employers. You know how poor papa's sentences are perpetually

losing themselves in their own recesses, like rivers that run underground? well, this evening he was worse than ever—he would disappear with a blessing and emerge with a curse—it was as hard to follow him as to trace a labyrinth in a quagmire; and at last he dropped off to sleep by way of peroration, and I left him breathing inarticulate thunder to the cat.

OWEN. Heavens! that was entirely out of order, for the preacher to snore at his own sermon!

ADA. Out of order? what would you have? papa is chaos in coat and trousers. O, if I were only a man, I could make a shift to be happy; nature formed me for the combat, I feel—and yet I must content myself with boxing a husband's ears and carving reputations among a parcel of dowagers! O the irony of fate! the perversity of chance!—But I don't know why I am taking you into my confidence so freely, unless it is that you are a physician in the shell.

OWEN. Let me assure you, Miss Ada, that your confidence in me will not be misplaced.

ADA. Not misplaced perhaps, but mislaid—for you will push it into some corner of your memory, between your tailor's address and the date of the next occultation of Arcturus, where it will never see the light again. A woman is a better confidant than a man, after all; for if she does proclaim upon the housetop the thing she has sworn to conceal, she at least shows an appreciation of the merits of your secret—whereas if you honor a man with your confidence, he hies him home and forgets it with all his might.

OWEN. What can I say, Miss Ada, except to protest——

ADA. Say nothing—it is I that am carrying on this dialogue—your part is nothing but listening, to misquote Peter Quince. Look at Eva Trevelyan; what a fortunate girl she is! In the first place she is an orphan; in the next place she is beautiful

and sweet-tempered ; and then she has a lover who adores the very soup she swallows. By-the-bye, there is something about him that whets my curiosity extremely ; he has a certain air of fierce melancholy which one seldom sees in an unmarried man. Do you know the cause of it ?

OWEN. That is a sad story, Miss Ada. You shall hear it, since you have been so frank with me—but pray don't repeat it for the world ! You must know then that Ernest Fortescue, a man of acres, proud as a Plantagenet, ambitious to his finger-nails, and beloved by the sweetest girl in all England save one, is a slave. A slave ? yes, worse—there is not an exile in the Siberian mines who would change places with him to-day.

ADA. What ? what ? a slave ? how so ?

OWEN. The man is an opium-eater.

ADA. An opium-eater ! impossible !

OWEN. He is an opium-eater, and what is worse, I fear he is incurable. He has tried every means of escape, but always in vain, and now he lies at the very bottom of despair. Poor fellow ! I pity him with all my heart—the more because he was not altogether to blame. His nature has been utterly poisoned by his evil fortune ; I remember him only a few years ago as open and fresh and generous as the day ; now he is merry and morose by turns, and lonely as yonder sea. Poor old Fortescue !

ADA. Poor fellow ! poor fellow ! But how does Eva take it ?

OWEN. She knows nothing of it : he has never had the heart to tell her. I am his only confidant, and my office is a very painful one. The poor fellow is at times altogether frenzied ; he fancies all the powers that be are leagued against him for his destruction : he speaks of his God with a kind of personal rancor, and erects an idol for the mere pleasure of blas-

pheming it. He will declaim for an hour against what he calls the tyranny of the gods, and find his revenge in launching an epigram at their expense. A hundred times I have heard him rail himself into good humor in this way ; he will begin with the most furious invectives and tragical attitudes, and end with a peal of laughter, rolling under his tongue the choicest morsels of his own spleen. What can you do with such a man ? I have proved to him again and again that his position is illogical ; I say to him, Let x equal the unknown quantity which you call——

ADA. Spare me your demonstrations, my dear sir ! I cannot endure to hear all that I find mysterious and adorable reduced to terms of x and y .—Here comes the man himself ! let us go ! his electric atmosphere always oppresses me—pray bring me to some shelter.

OWEN. Agreed—but he looks ill—I will return soon and try to cheer him up. Come, then !

(Exeunt.)

Enter ERNEST.

ERNEST. What a brave mummary of the clouds is here !

Some counterfeiting birds with wine-dipt wings,

Footless, ethereal ; some like scarlet poppies

In golden grain ; some like to wreaths of snow,

Or plummy waterfalls and coral reefs,

Lagoons, and orange-groves, and mossy hills.

Yea, the old ocean's self makes merry awhile,

And all his way-worn billows are transformed

To naked Naiads rolling rosily.

It was my fancy when I was a child

That yon fair lights that gleam upon the brow

Of every blushing wave, were like the vision

Which cheered the patriarch on his couch of stone—

A ladder with its topmost rounds in heaven ;
And, gazing with a child's eyes, I could see
White angel-wings on every flaming stair,
And at the top the hills of pearl and gold,
Parted by bluest waters virginal
And valleys of inviolate loveliness.
Now I am wiser ; now at last I know
The emptiness of yonder splendid skies—
Palaces uninhabited, that mock us
With blazing windows—mirrors that reflect
Nothing to gilded nothing : I have spied
The nakedness of yon celestial country.

Re-enter OWEN.

OWEN. Good-morrow, friend ! still in the doles ? for shame !
Keep up your head, man ! patience conquers all :
How fares it with you ?

ERNEST. As with other cowards ;
I have fought the ill fight ; I have run my course :
Henceforth for me there is a crown laid up
Of dust and ashes.

OWEN. Not so ; there is time !
You cannot root the forest from her soil
With the same implements, the same scant labor
The weeding gardener needs. Courage, my friend !
What ! is not Eva's hand worth all your pains,
Though you were struggling in the hydra's coils
With greater than Laocoön's agonies ?

ERNEST. She is too sweet a morsel for a man ;
The gods will have her : and for mine own part
My rights are forfeit. Let me tell you, friend,
Were it a foreign foe I had to meet,
I know my duty : but what cunning smith

Can forge a helmet that shall fence the head
 Against the rude rebellion of the heart ?
 My curse upon that botcher at his craft—
 More knave than fool, methinks—who built and launched
 me

Without a helm upon these howling seas !
 Almighty God ? almighty charlatan,
 Assassin, coward !—My good friend and pedant,
 What strain of alleluias can I sing
 To him that made me, when I feel myself
 Planned with a devilish ingenuity
 To sink and not to swim, to break, not bend ?
 When I am still the victim of myself,
 And all I have of generous or of good
 Gnaws at me like the dogs in Scylla's womb ?
 I, plead for pardon from this miserable,
 This damnable, this thing ! Rather shall he
 Crouch for forgiveness here !

OWEN.

Good words ! good words !

What need of this ? you cannot win your freedom
 By roaring through the bars. Adjust yourself
 To Nature and the working of her wheels,
 Or some swift revolution seizes you
 And hurls you, bitten by a thousand teeth,
 Into the hopper—not a hero's fate ;
 A madman's rather. Cease to fight with windmills !
 The irresistible must have its way.
 Let the past be ; you cannot mend it now ;
 As for the future, it is plastic yet,
 And yours to make or mar—the Lachesis
 That weaves your fate is Ernest Fortescue,
 None else.

ERNEST. True, Herr Magister Lobesan !

Most true, and very trite ; but let me tell you,
If I could pluck from heaven with my two hands
This full-fed God, this plump aristocrat,
I'd hang him on a lamp-stem like a dog,
And make the world his heir.

Ha ! ha ! what fustian !

Good ! good ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

OWEN.

Yes, now you laugh !

The winds are not more variable than you ;
How will your laughter help you ? tell me that !

ERNEST. If I am inconsistent, so is God ;

To-day he gives me smiles, to-morrow tears,
A bride at morning, and at night a dunghill ;
I cannot rise above my source's level :
Such as I am, I am—and God himself
Can say no more.

OWEN.

You are incorrigible !

I'll quit you—fare-you-well !

ERNEST.

Adieu, my friend !

(*Exit OWEN.*)

Spirit of evil ! sower of the chaos,
Outlaw of outlaws, omnipresent foe !
Upon whose helm the fire of battle burns
Unwavering, unextinguished, unappeased,
Mocking to scorn the puny thunderbolts
Flung by the soft Olympian's rosy hands—
Thou hast prevailed ; I yield me to thy grace.
In vain have I withstood for many a year
Thy girdled siege, thy stratagems and storms ;
I have lost all : the good God hides his head
And quits me in my misery like a rat—

So may the overruling Destinies
Do unto him, and more !

But for thyself,
Great Power of Ill, thou art in league with all
That lovely is ; the flowers fight for thee ;
Thine is the vine ; the birds are in thy pay ;
The Graces don thy starry panoply ;
Thou marchest to the soft Ionian strains
Of young Apollo ; dreams are spies of thine,
And the sweet summer bears thy banner forth :
While I have nothing but this feeble heart,
The half of which is thine—nay, take it all !
Woe to the conquered !

Plead for thyself, O God ! potter of clay
That lives and feels and suffers and is damned,
Why hast thou made me thus ? why am I powerless
For any good ? why dost thou grudge me weal ?
Why was I born the offspring of thy wrath,
Deformed ere formed ? what had I done to thee ?
Wilt thou not answer ? nay, thou smil'st in scorn ;
What unto thee are tears and breaking hearts
But painted passions of a puppet-play
Wherewith thine endless leisure is beguiled !
I take my plea from thine unrighteous bar
To Truth, who lies in some foul cell of thine
Weeping immortal tears.

Ay, thou canst loose Orion's golden bands,
Or yoke Behemoth ; but, for all thy godhead,
Thou canst not quell my hate ! Ay, hear me, Thunderer !
In mine unshaken soul I too am god,
Girt with an army of swift silent thoughts

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Invincible by any arts of thine
As yonder clouds, that fly before the sunbeams
But to return. Know then that I renounce thee,
Thou thing of draff! how like another Nero
Thou slumberest on thy throne, while seraphim
Drown with the tinkling of their courtly viols
The most unmannerly and discordant groans
That mankind utters. No mere private curses
I cast upon thee thus; my name is Legion;
I am the tribune of humanity,
Ay, of the whole creation, bird and brute!
I call to witness every mortal thing
That owes thee life and death, labor and sorrow,
And cry, like old Prometheus from his crag,
"O air of heaven, swift wings of sweeping wind,
River-springs, dimpled laugh innumerable
Of ocean ripples, thou all-mother earth,
And thou bright orb of sun that seest all,
Behold what God inflicts upon a god!"

Enter FISHERMAN.

—Saint Peter himself, by all that's apostolic! and trying to earn an honest penny, as I live! can anything be more miraculous? Hail, holy fisher of souls!

FISHERMAN. No soles in these waters, sir; mackerel sometimes, and congers, plenty of congers—but no soles. Good night, sir!

ERNEST. Why so fast? cannot you stay and have a quiet chat with a friend? Come now, I have some good tobacco about me—will that tempt you to remain?

FISHER. Well, sir, my day's work is done, and I was a going home to my missis. But, seeing you're so sociable, I don't mind if I do stay a little while.

ERNEST. It's a bargain—my tobacco for your society—that's what I call *quid pro quo*. I always carry tobacco with me, for that is the only bait you west-country people will nibble at. Well, how does the world use you?

FISHER. Ah, sir, these be hard times for the poor man. Toiling and moiling rathe and late, sweating and sleeping, sleeping and sweating from year's end to year's end, like the turning of a cart-wheel in a ma'sh road, that's all we can trust to; and as for laying a penny by, 'tis harder than for a man to fill these here drag-nets with sea-water. You gentlemen as never know what 'tis to want for a meal, you mid think that our troubles be mere fleabites—but a thousand fleabites, fresh-made every day and all day long, give a deal of itching, they do. But what should you know o' poor volk's ailments? as my missis says, no one but yourself can tell which eye the soap's in.

ERNEST. True, friend; but you seem to relish your pipe in spite of the times.

FISHER. That I do, sir, and thank you for that same. A pipe and a mug is the only two pleasures left for us common men. In my young days there used to be fairs once a year in half the parishes round here; and what with club-walking every Whit-Monday, and rounders on Good Friday, and harvest-home-tide, and apple-christening-time, and gooding-day, and kissing-bush-time, and what not, there was many a bit of play in the year's round; but nowadays there's no feasting nor merry-making to be had except at the Methodist tea-meetings, and they, you know, sir, beyn't o' no count alongside a good fire in a clean tap, and four or five butties to smoke or play all-fours with.

ERNEST. Yes, yes, the age of holidays has receded; the world grows avaricious in its old age, and grudges itself every

hour that adds no money to its hoard. Prophecy again, my good Jeremiah.

FISHER. John Rawlings, sir, if you please. Well, to go on with my tale, in old Squire Fortescue's days there used to be the poaching to keep us gay : many and many's the time I've stood up to my waist in water half the night a trout-fishing, or scampered a mile or two through the thick brush with a gamekeeper at my heels, when perhaps I'd been caught a-setting of a gin or a-pocketing a few pheasants' eggs by moonlight. Ah ! that was sport if you like ! But them days is gone by ; the young squire he don't preserve his game, and lets his tenants fish and shoot wherever they list ; and that puts an end to another o' the poor's pleasures.

ERNEST. Why, surely the trout bite as well and the pheasants' eggs taste as sweet as they did in the old squire's time ?

FISHER. Surely they do, sir ; but what sport is it to catch a paltry trout or two or a red-legged hare when every Tom, Dick and Harry has a right to do the same ? The danger is the life of the whole game ; when that's out the thing's as flat as hunting blackberries.

ERNEST. Gad ! you're a strange fellow ! you seem to take it ill that you can't become a running target for the keepers !

FISHER. It's not that, sir ; but when I see a young gentleman like Mr. Ernest Fortescue flinging his preserves to his farmers and his ploughmen, I doubt he's found some sport as is more in fashion or as pleases him better. No man's such a fool as to sell something for nothing.

ERNEST. You are severe on this Mr. Fortescue ; but they tell me he is not unjust to his tenantry.

FISHER. No, I'll say that ; he's a good landlord and a good master ; but I count he makes it pay ; if he don't get it out of our bellies, he takes it off of our backs. I've not seen him

this many a year; but they tell me he makes friends with all his work-folk, and talks to 'em as if they was his equals. Now that's not natural, to my thinking; what fellowship is there between a squire and a hedger and ditcher? no, no, if he's feeding us so sweet and fat, it's because we shall yield him a bigger flitch that way.

ERNEST. The truth is, you are too proud to admit him into your order; you plebeians are the true aristocrats, after all.

FISHER. Proud, sir? no, my dear man, I'm past all that! Since the day they took my poor boy to Dartmoor prison, five year ago, for killing a man when he was crazy with drink, I've not had a mote o' pride left. Proud? what call have we poor folk to be proud? our wives are slatterns, and our sons are drunkards; and even our grey hairs are a shame to us, for they be the whips that drive us to the poorhouse.

ERNEST. Give me your hand, friend! you have the true ring. And now, pray do me the honor of accepting this trifle to buy tobacco for your unhappy son.

FISHER. God bless you, sir! 'tis long since I've seen so much gold at once. Whose health shall I drink for this, sir?

ERNEST. I am Ernest Fortescue, friend, at your service.—Hush! don't begin to revoke and spoil a good game! There—good-night to you!

FISHER. Good-night, and thank you kindly, sir!

(Exit.)

ERNEST. How am I better than this raving sot

That slays his comrade in a pothouse brawl
And pines in jail for't? What a slave am I,
Who, dandled on the lap of Earth and Time,
And dowered with Fortune's favors, land, love, lore,
Lack yet enough of common manliness
To bridle a more murderous appetite
Than that which gripes the spare and scannel guts

Of yon poor maudlin ! Hear me swear, O Earth !
I plight the honor of a Fortescue,
The holy troth and loyalty of a lover,
That if I cannot rid me speedily
Of this foul poison, my accursed body
Shall never soil the Parian purity
Of yon sweet maid ; but, like a leprous man,
I will betake me to some friendly desert
And die the Roman death ! So help me heaven !
I hear your hoarse applause, ye myriad waves,
And I shall earn it !

Enter EVA.

EVA. Who is here ? what, Ernest ?
 Spouting heroics to a school of oysters ?
 A goodly occupation !

ERNEST. My own Eva !
O pardon me, thou sweet and gracious presence,
That for a single moment I have suffered
Thy holy fire to fade and flicker low
Within the temple of my memory !

EVA. Still in the shadows, friend ? your clouded face
 Is like a dial whose gloom invincible
 Dares the meridian's darts. Why is it so ?
 Will you not tell me ?

ERNEST. Sweet, this transient gloom
Is but the dusk of an extinguished night.
My sadness has a cause—but my hope is
That you may never learn it—for to you
I look for light, deliverance, golden days.

EvA. How can I heal, not knowing your disease?

ERNEST. Needless to tell the sun "Shine here and here!"

Continue but to be ! thine influence heals ;
 The lucid skies go with thee, and the sunshine
 Streams round thy forehead ever ; dawn and day
 Follow thy feet ; the stars are in thy hair ;
 The rainbow is thy tire, and under thee
 Sail the white clouds ; and thine auroral presence
 Suffuses with a rosy light and heat
 The kindling air.

EVA. Fie ! what a rhapsody !
 You do not love me—this is but a trick
 To put me off with words.

ERNEST. Ah, spare me, sweet !
 Bid me impale myself, and I shall do 't ;
 Bid me turn back the full Niagara's flood,
 Or stuff the fiery throat of old Vesuvius
 With his own spume, and I shall undertake it ;
 But what you ask is harder and more sharp
 Than all of these.

EVA. Well ! come your ways with me ;
 I have a song to teach you.

ERNEST. Could you teach
 My tongue the tithe of those melodious numbers
 My heart has learnt of you, you were a greater
 Than Orpheus or Cecilia. Come then, sweet !
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*Library in FORTESCUE'S house, the windows of which open upon a lawn ; time, night. Enter ERNEST.*

ERNEST. The stars are out—the sky is white with stars ;
 A dark-blue sky like Mediterranean deeps,
 Without an isle of cloud. The most high gods
 Who hold a solemn revelry to-night,

Have scattered constellations thick as daisies
About the sapphire floor whereon they move
To music like tall ships. This is my hour
To keep an assignation with the stars.

(Steps upon the balcony.)

How vast a wilderness of golden vines
Grows rank in yonder heavens ! the Galaxy
Waves all her fiery forests, where the moon
Is wont to wander like a milk-white fawn ;
Clusters of starry fruit, roses of light,
Bloom upon unseen boughs ambrosial ;
And o'er Elysian fields the planets pass,
Bright as the ancient gods whose names they bear.
—Which now shall I of these resplendent ones
Choose for the ruler of my horoscope ?

Not thee, thou ruddy Mars ; although I love
The strain of sinews in the bloodless jousts
Of high debate and oratoric war,
And that divine insanity which burns
With holy fire the mockeries and wrongs
That gnaw the world's heart ; yet I choose not thee.

Jove, thou art lordly ; I too have aspired,
Ay, to the highest and the noblest things,
Than which a hair-breadth less is infamy
To eager souls ; I love the splendid East,
Wherein the mountains thrust a fiery finger ;
Fain would I set my shoulder to the world
And heave it heavenward—seize the brazen lightning
And climb its naked edge to the welkin's belfry,
Spurning the stars—yet none the less for thee
My hands are empty and my altars cold.

O maddening moon, I miss thy beams to-night :

Enchanted seas antipodal pursue
Thy white and cruel feet ; for me, I shudder
At thy sardonic lights and awful shades,
Thy cold embraces and thy deadly loves,
Thy sterile coinage of illusive silver,
Mirage of limpid springs on arid sands,
And all thy meretricious comeliness.
So be it ever ! and I choose not thee.

O flower-fair and fruitful of delight,
Venus, the well-desired of gods and men !
I hail thee mistress ; for thou art not she
That lapped her milk-soft limbs in Paphian foam,
Flushing the ripples with her rosinness ;
Nor she that let her falling tresses play
—Like the soft touch of Zephyr's flowery fingers
Fragrant of honey—on the sleeping face
Of young Adonis ; no such wanton thou :
Thou art Urania, undefiled as light ;
To thee I lift a supplicating hand.

Thou therefore bless thy votary ! let no storms
Make shipwreck of my love ; let thy chaste beams
Lead me from this wild cauldron Fury-stirred
Wherein I whirl, and bring mine argosy
Safe among easy winds and quiet seas ;
Let every maid and mother wear for me
By virtue of her dower of womanhood
The girdle of thy perfect loveliness ;
And shorten thou the hours, O Queen of Love,
Till as a happy bridegroom I shall hold
My Eva's hand and lead her gracious form
To hearth and threshold, while the nuptial nuts
Are scattered, and the nuptial torches wave ;

So shall thine altar smoke with scented fires,
And golden doves shall draw thine ivory car,
And I will make thee hymns, whose melodies
Maidens may murmur to the breeze that haunts
Italian vines or India's plummy palms,
Ruffles the green magnolias, or makes rock
The solemn spires of old Yosemite!
Farewell! farewell!

(Re-entering his room, his eyes rest upon a phial containing a solution of opium.)

Get thee behind me, Satan!

I tremble like a bird before the snake
To see yon cursed phial. O coward! coward!
I will not look upon it. Can it be
That none of all the thoughts that prick men's natures—
Not the strict mandates of imperious reason,
Nor seuse of shame, nor consciousness of manhood,
Nor pride of race, nor memory of my love,
Can whip me out of this effeminate mood?—
—Methinks I smell it! roses of Arabia
Are not so sweet! God! what a fermentation
Hisses within me—I am all a-thaw——
A sip, a thimbleful could do no harm—

(Reaches towards the phial.)

Halt, fool, and hold your suicidal hand!
Remember her you love, remember—Tush!
This is the very parrot's paternoster;
My thoughts are mutineers, they will not follow
Where I command. What! I will be obeyed!
Attention! will you sell your plighted bride,
Your unbegotten children, whose mute hands
Reach out of Chaos, pleading? Count your gains

To-morrow—reckon up the brief bright moments
 Of your fool's-paradise—appraise their bliss ;
 Then write Per Contra ; loss of living sap
 So much ; so long a spell of shivering palsy ;
 Despair and Disillusion thundering “ Death ! ”
 And that unquiet phantom of Remorse
 Proffering her knife. I am to-morrow's conscience ;
 Choose whether you will hear me now ! to-morrow—
 —The devil take your sermons ! give it me !

(Seizes and raises the phial, then pauses suddenly and hurls it against the wall.)

O fool ! there lies my sole and perfect pleasure
 Wasted like water ! Curse your violent fist !
 I am faint with craving.

(Raises the fragments of the bottle.)

Here is yet some nectar,

I thank the gods !

(Drinks.)

Now am I born anew !

Now everything to my enlightened eyes
 Grows fairer, larger ; now am I exalted
 To the heaven of heavens. A grateful indolence
 Slips o'er me like a garment of smooth silk,
 My blood is all aglow, as though I came
 Fresh from the bath.

(Sinks upon a sofa.)

Hark, hark ! a rolling music

Like tread of thunder-clouds in ordered march
 Shaking the raindrops as a peal of bells
 From their full breasts !

O splendors !

(Falls into a stupor. Curtain.)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Garden before CARROLL'S house. Enter ERNEST.*

ERNEST. Now, while the iron of my remorse is hot,
I'll strike, and make the best amends I may.
Amends? that's hopeless; for the links of air
That bind my better genius to my soul
Cannot be soldered; one by one they part,
And, like the thistle-down, he soars at last,
While this unbeauteous and deflowered spirit
Rots in sterility. Hither she comes,
Warbling the while, as I were Cynthus
And she the bird of morning; ah, poor soul!
She twitters to the torch that fires her nest,
And deems it is the dawn.

EVA (*singing as she enters*).

Come, let us laugh, ha! ha! for Sorrow
Sups with our friends across the way;
The rogue may dine with us to-morrow,
So let us laugh, ha! ha! to-day.

—Ernest! what ails you?

Nay, do not turn aside—are you afraid
Of your best friends? So, let me hold your hand;
What is it, then?

ERNEST. Forbear to touch me, sweet!
I am the meanest and the loathliest creature
That crawls and slimes the world.

EVA. I hold not so;
I would not change a feature of your face,

An impulse of your heart, had I the making
Of seraphim.

ERNEST. Ay, seraphs of the dunghill ;
 Buzzards, and vultures, and the choir obscene
 That gleans behind the daintier sons of the sty,
 Praising the Lord for offal ! Mark, I pray you ;
 The hog that finds a jewel in his trough
 Snuffs it and goes his way ; but I, more gross,
 Have gorged the fairest gem in all the world
 As it were clay. O, I could curse the hour
 When, like the snake of Eden breathing guile,
 I wooed and won you—'twas a dastard's act !
 'Twas an unmanly and a treacherous blow
 I dealt you then !

EVA. If that were treachery,
 May heaven preserve me from the conjurations
 Of Truth and Faith ! would God that all my sex
 Mothered such dastards !

ERNEST. Bear with me a little.
 When first I saw you, and your loveliness
 Moved me to win you, I had been for years
 The victim of a vile debauchery—
 I was an opium-eater, and confirmed
 In that bad course—as to the how and why
 It matters not ; I offer no excuse ;—
 The desperation of a sleepless man
 Who nightly tosses on a mountainous couch
 Lacks your fine pulpit sense of right and wrong :—
 But let that pass ; this vice was mine, I say,
 And to such mastery and o'ertopping pitch
 It mounted soon, that when I would recall it
 And breed it to my hand, the task was harder

Than for the tender and unbearded wheat
To raise the millstone. Many and many a time,
For weeks and months together, I regained
My freedom and my hope, although the cravings
Of morbid appetite would rend and shake me
As with an epilepsy ; but at last,
Inevitable as death, returning weakness
Renewed my fetters. Yet I sprung and struggled
Like a strong salmon with the iron hook
Fast in his jaws, until at last my force
Failed, and I drifted with my destiny
Still as despair—indifferent as a stone
That cares not at what mark the slinger sling him,
—Or like some wanderer on a mountain moor,
Huddled and stumbling in funereal snows,
Who feels the sweetness of a deadly slumber
Steal over him, and unresisting dies—
I lived and waited.

But before that day
I had besought Almighty God with tears
(Heaven save the mark !)—and that at no set season,
But without ceasing, morningtide and midnight,
Falling upon my knees and making moan,
“ O God ! God ! God ! ” I cried—“ deliver me
“ Out of this pit of hell ! ”

But there was nothing ;
Baal and Jehovah slept on easy pillows
Drowsy with good fat sinecures, and flushed
With fine old nectar. Take away your God !
Set him in some dark corner of the world
Like a child's broken doll ! the faith is gone
Wherewith I clothed yon soulless lineaments

In rosy light and majesty serene ;

My childish days are over.

Then, like the blessed sun of heaven, your face
Dawned out upon me, and my withered heart
Flamed forth in blossom. Ah, forgive me, dear,
If in the joyous atmosphere of love
That smote me like a breeze, I did forget
My menial office and my leprosy,
And dared to hang my servile ball and chain
Upon the rosy heels of heaven-born Iris.
By God, it was a despicable thing
That I, the paramour of Shame and Madness,
And plighted like a bridegroom o'er and o'er
To death and all the devils in perdition,
Should ask of you, the lily of all virgins,
To make a third in bed with Nemesis
And sit beside the Furies at my board !
I tell you, Eva, I could tear my heart
Forth with these fingers for the shame of it !
See, you are free—I came to tell you this—
I loose my hold of you henceforth, my darling !
Curse me and go your way !

EVA.

Stay then, and hear

The curses I shall heap upon your head !
I love you, dear, I love you ; would to God
That I could make you happy with a wish—
Ay, with a deed, though it were desperate
As that old Roman's, who to save the State
Plunged with his horse into the sheer abyss
And vowed his foemen to the gods of hell ;
This ring upon my finger is to me
As vital as the girdling atmosphere

That marries earth and heaven—it holds my heart—
I cannot yield it upon such a cause.
I will not let you go; your Nemesis,
Your furies and your fiends, why let them come !
They shall not drag you from these arms of mine ;
I know my rights—I am your bride affianced—
And unto what far corner of the world
The fates may drive you—to the dome of heaven
Or to the pit of hell—my place is there.
Have I not said enough ? What, will you force me
To seal my maledictions with a kiss ?
Ah, traitor !

ERNEST. Nestle here, sweet bird of peace !
And God forbid that I should fling thee forth
On the wide waste, if thou canst make thy home
Upon so bare a bough !
Ah Eva, sweet one, you reverse the legend ;
You bring me laurels from the tree of life
And lay their healing fragrance on my breast,
Not without sweeter kisses. But consider ;
I am pure poison ; would you taint your blood
With foul disease ?

EVA. You are a royal poison ;
The diamond-dust that Eastern princes use
Is not so rich ; the daintiest Cleopatra
Would ask no better. Do you want an answer ?
I love you !

ERNEST. Then for the love of heaven, my girl, reproach me !
And cease to consecrate my infamy
With the regard of your compassionate eyes ;
For in the warmth of your most tender looks
I, like the shrinking reptile that I am,

Expire in agony. What, more caresses ?
My love, you are so pitiful to vices
That whitest virtues will debauch themselves
To win a tear from you.

EVA. Not so, my Ernest ;
Pity is piety ; I serve the gods
Best when I kiss your eyes. But pardon me ;
You know the curious nature of a woman ;
You must have had strange visions in your time—
Dream them aloud for me.

ERNEST. Strange dreams, indeed ;
Diverse as Nature, yet alike in this—
Scarce one of them but thrilled in all its parts
With colors of unearthly loveliness
But all disordered—suns of silver whiteness
Beamed out of rosy skies on golden grass,
And leaf and cloud and water changed their hues
Like the chameleon. I remember once
I dreamed that they had flung me violently
Down a deep well, whose wide circumference
—Staired like a Roman circus, tier on tier—
Sloped inwards like a cone ; the place was blacker
Than midnight in a mine, and as I tumbled,
A noise of horrible screams and bestial howlings
Increased each moment ; down and ever downward
I toppled headlong, sheer, and all the while
A mountainous and ever-growing weight
Oppressed me like a nightmare ; I did leave
An echo like a thunder—yet I heard
Some fearful indescribable thing behind me
Swooping and roaring—ah ! I felt its breath
And horrid hair brushing my back !—but at last,

Stunned by the swift accelerating motion,
Stifled and scorched and crushed, I slept like death.

Another night methought I was a star ;
Not such an orb as our astronomy
Describes—a mightier sun—but a quaint figure
Like the rude sign upon an antique tavern.
Out of my body vast and burning beams
Were thrust like wedges ; like a wheel I whirled
Cogged with a thousand rays, and at the nave
I bore a naked eye, sans lids or lashes,
Aching for sleep that never might return.
All through the day intolerable heat
Consumed me, and I cursed the sun whose beams
Pierced me at every pore like burning lances ;
At night I shivered with intensest cold,
And longed for heat, even from the hottest furnace
In purgatory.

EVA. This is horrible ;
 You make me shudder to the finger-tips ;
 Go on, go on !

ERNEST. Another time I dreamed
That I was dead and fastened in my bier,
But with the sense of hearing and of touch
Perfect about me, and a power of vision
That pierced all barriers ; I could hear the choir
Chanting a requiem o'er me, and the ropes
Creak, and then, plash ! I slid into the sea :
And as I sank, fainter and ever fainter
The voices grew, and wash—wash—wash the sea
Did surge and seethe and gurgled at mine ear
With a monotony of mingling sounds
So like articulate speech, that I was fain

—These are the luxuries of the devil's palace,
That cost men's liberties.

EVA. Did you not say
That for a time you earned your liberty
Through pains and patience ?

ERNEST. When I saw you first,
So strong a strain of courage your sweet hands
Grafted upon me, that for six long months
No single drop of poison passed my lips.
With what a face could I, a Fortescue,
Have dared to win your heart and ask your hand,
Had I been reeking from a swinish bed ?
No ! though the sharks of hell were in my wake,
I was not carrion yet ! True, I did woo you ;
But for the moment I was pure and free,
And by your grace I deemed I should abide so :
Wherein I erred most damnably it seems.

EVA. But, good my friend, what you have done aforetime
You can do yet, and under happier omens,
For I shall reinforce you with my heart,
And side by side we'll break another lance
With this old beldame Fortune. Shake the dice !
Pursue your luck, and it will turn at last !
A fig for Destiny ! a woman's wits
Will find a way to blunt her fatal shears ;
And you and I, my friend, will shock the stars,
Though they should hurl from all the heights of heaven
Their bolts upon us, and by fell conjunctions
Think to immesh us. Listen, my good comrade !
We'll make a new campaign for half a year ;
I put my faith in you ; you will not fail me :
And at the end of six brief glorious months

We'll have the bells rung for a victory
 And for a wedding, if it like you so.
 And, once well married, I defy your sirens
 To win you back with all their witcheries.
 What say you, love ?

ERNEST. What should I say, sweetheart ?
 What says the convict to a long reprieve ?
 I came for judgment, hoping nothing else
 Than the infernal horrors for my portion,
 And you have given me Paradise.
 O light, sweet light and air, and high blue heavens,
 Once more I greet you !

EVA. Captain, I am come
 To join my colors ; give the word !

ERNEST. What, I ?
 The vanquished of a hundred fights ? not so !
 You shall command.

EVA. So be it. Forward ! March !
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*The same. Enter JOHN, with a watering-pot. To him enter MARY, with a coverlet which she is repairing.*

MARY (*sings*). Charlie is my darling—

JOHN. Polly !

MARY (*sings*). My darling, my darling—

JOHN. Mary !

MARY (*sings*). Charlie is my darling—

JOHN. Miss Mary !

MARY (*sings*). The young Cheffonier.

JOHN (*laughs*). The young Cheffonier ! Ho ! ho ! ho ! What
 hignorance ! Cheffonier ! He ! he ! he !

MARY. Well, what's wrong about that, Jack ? That's the
 way I learnt it.

JOHN (*whistles*). Whó !—who !—whó !—who !—whó !—who !
—Ha ! ha ! ha ! Cheffonier !

MARY. John, tell me quick, what is it ?

JOHN (*whistles*). Who—whó !—who ; who—whó !—who—
Ho ! ho ! ho ! Cheffonier !

MARY. Mr. John, please tell me !—Don't stand there whistling like a tureen or a French bull, you great lout !

JOHN. You mean to say like a tit-o-reen or a bullfrench,^b Polly. You townsfolk have such cockney names for birds and things ; I wonder they don't teach you better.

MARY. Never mind me—you have no call to speak about other people, I'm sure. When you are hexcited you talk like a clodhopper yourself, and forget all your fine words. And you make big blunders too ; I heard you only last night speaking of cows “emasculating” the cud, when you should have said “domesticating” it. So there now !

JOHN. Talking of cows, I heard tell of a town girl that wanted to go a-milking, only the cow as she went to milk wasn't a cow at all—though we had a prime cut of beef off the same hani-mal at Christmas. Whó !—who !—whó !—who !—whó !—who !
—He ! he ! he ! Cheffonier !

MARY. Plague take the cow ! John, tell me now, please, or I'll never look at you again.

JOHN. What you ought for to have sung is this : (*sings*)

Charlie is my darling,
The young Chevelure !

MARY. The young Chevelure ! What does it mean, Jack ?

JOHN. Why the young hair to the throne, to be sure. We botanists, we knows all these Latin words—'tis our trade to know 'em. All the learned professions require a knowledge of Latin ; it keeps out the quacks and the vulgar cads. But if you be so beastly ignorant, I can't keep company with you

any longer, Mary. I can't marry beneath my rank in life, you know, poor Poll.

MARY. Who wants to keep company with you, I should like to know? I'd have you to understand that your betters have proposed for my 'and.

JOHN. Who? Tom Lush? Sho! he was too drunk to know what he was about. He'd just as soon propose to me when he's in liquor as he would to you.

MARY. Mr. Lush is always the gentleman, drunk or sober. He falls into the gutter with as much ceremony as if he was backing out of the queen's presence; he always apologises to the lamp-post for taking the liberty of leaning against it, and he says "God bless me" every time he 'iccups. He has more manners when he's drunk than you have when you're sober, and more taste too.

JOHN. Don't he mad now, Poll! pretty Poll!

MARY. I won't be called pretty Poll, sir! I'd have you to know as I'm not a parrot! Don't speak to me, sir!

JOHN (*aside*). Now I've offended her. I'm a fool! I really must learn to prune my luxuriant wit; 'tis a great piece of self-denial, but one must humor the women. Upon my soul, she's a pretty creature!—Look at her fut! what a sweet little fut! Ah, if I only had that little fut to repose in my bosom! (*Aloud*) Mary, 'tis Lydcombe fair next Thursday.

MARY. Well, what of that?

JOHN. What shall I bring thee for a fairing? A little gold ring, eh, Mary?—Ah now, Mary!

MARY. Don't be silly, my dear.

JOHN. Sweet creature, say that you will bloom in your John's greenhouse, 'orever! Say that you will be his pelargonium, his——

MARY. Never, sir! What do you take me for? Your pelar-

gonium, indeed! No, sir; if I change my condition, I shall change it in lawful wedlock; I'll be no man's pelargonium, I!

JOHN. You mistake me, my dear! (*Aside*) I must reduce my language to her level, I see; the poor thing has no culture. (*Aloud*) Again I ask, will you be my sweet pea, Polly? will you be my perennial rose, Mary? will you be my Glory de John? will you—will you—will you marry me, Mary?

MARY. To be sure I will; why didn't you ask me before?

JOHN. O, hecstacy! Embrace me, my hown!

(*They fall into each other's arms—then recoil with a scream.*)

MARY. Ah! you great awkward clown! you have emptied your filthy watering-pot all over my new dress!

JOHN. And you have stuck your infernal needle into the small of my back, you flighty thing you!

MARY. Serve you right, clumsy! My dress is ruined—cost me sixpence-halfpenny a yard only last week. Do you suppose the sprigs on a printed calico want watering, eh?

JOHN. These, my dear, are some of the trials of love. Don't let a little water put you out, Molly! Why, I would go through fire and water for you.

MARY. You mean to say through gin and water, I suppose. —Quick, John! get behind the shrubbery! here's Mr. Stuckey and Miss Ada coming! And mind you don't squeeze me, do you hear?

(*They hide themselves.*)

Enter OWEN and ADA.

OWEN. Ah, here is our seat. Now for a little quiet conversation.

ADA. Oh, my dear sir, I am sick of quiet conversation; do stand on one leg, or play the jew's-harp, or turn a somersault, just to oblige me! And if you could dance a hornpipe or two, I should take it as a favor.

OWEN. My dear lady !

ADA. And it would relieve me greatly if you could direct your attention to some other object in the landscape. It is very foolish of me, I know, but whenever you regard me with that long keen gaze I always fancy you are going to dissect me.

OWEN. Certainly, certainly !

(Looks down on the ground ; catches sight of ADA'S foot, and unconsciously lets his eye travel up to her face.)

ADA. For heaven's sake, spare me ! I can feel your glance creeping over me like a leech—there, don't be angry—stealing over me like a sunbeam, I will say. Does that console you ?

OWEN. Entirely, entirely. *(Aside)* How the devil am I to begin this operation ? I wish to heaven I could chloroform her ! Well, now or never. *(Aloud)* A-a-ah ! Miss Ada !

ADA. Yes !

OWEN. Miss Carroll !—a-a-ah !

ADA. What is it, sir ?

OWEN. Ah—Madam !—a-ah !

ADA. Dear me, Mr. Stuckey, you are not very brilliant this morning. Really, I would almost as soon talk to the calculating machine.

OWEN. Hem ! yes. Now about that calculating machine, do you know, Babbage never——

ADA. O sir, I hope Mr. Babbage is in heaven !

OWEN. Why yes, I hope so, I am sure.

ADA. But I fear not. Woe unto them by whom offences come, you know ; and I am sure Mr. Babbage and his machine must have made many a good man swear.

OWEN. Eh ? ah, yes ! I beg your pardon ; what was I saying ?

ADA. You had got as far as Madam.

OWEN (*aside*). Deuce take it! only just in Genesis! (*Aloud*) I was about to say, my dear Miss Ada, that there are moments in life—there are moments in life—there are, I may say, momentous moments in life——

ADA. Yes, indeed! I have often noticed it. I wish with all my heart we could consume our moments wholesale like cheesemites, and swallow a century at a mouthful. This momentary progress is so tedious!

OWEN. Heavens! what a Saturnian appetite!—Talking of Saturn, do you know I have a private theory of my own with regard to his rings——

ADA. O dear! O dear! I wish to heaven that Saturn's rings were in every astronomer's nose! Oh! why was I born?

OWEN (*aside*). Mehercle! what a bog I'm in! I must put on another mule. (*Aloud*) I was having a very pleasant conversation with Miss Trevelyan this morning, Miss Ada, in which——

ADA. Indeed, sir! I am not conscious of possessing any interest in your conversations with Miss Trevelyan.

OWEN (*aside*). Aha! now she moves! Whoop! gee! get up, Dobbin! (*Aloud*) At any rate you have an interest in this particular conversation, Miss Ada, for we were talking of you.

ADA. I feel flattered by Miss Trevelyan's condescension, I am sure. (*Aside*) Hateful thing!

OWEN. You seem troubled, Miss Carroll: I shall be happy to prescribe for you if you are ill.

ADA. Never better, I assure you. The only prescription I need is peace.

OWEN. Well, then, as I was just saying, we were speaking of you. May I not tell you what we said?

ADA. Not for the world, sir! I have no desire to pry into

the secrets of your freemasonry. There are mysteries that even a woman will respect.

OWEN. But there was one thing Eva Trevelyan said which I should really like——

ADA. My dear sir, I positively don't care a pin for anything that was said on either side.

OWEN. I perceive, madam, that my presence is disagreeable to you. I shall have the honor to bid you good-morning. (*Aside*) I must try the virtue of a little exodus upon her.

ADA. Your courtesy, sir, anticipates my wishes. I was just about to request the favor of your absence.

OWEN. I take pleasure in obeying you, madam.
(*Bows, and quits her, but conceals himself in a bower at a little distance.*)

ADA. Now he has gone away in a huff; and it was all my fault. O dear! what an impatient little minx I am! how rude and ill-bred he must think me! Oh, why didn't he stay? couldn't he see I was only making believe? I wish to heaven he would only come back and be tiresome again! I am dying to be bored to death—I positively languish for a lecture; a little tedium now and then is so refreshing. Ah! those dear delightful logarithms! that fascinating anatomy! that ravishing logic! that enchanting political economy! O, come back, Owen, Owen, while I am in a melting mood! come and riddle me with syllogisms, saturate me with syntax, pelt me to death with the differential calculus, carve me into conic sections like a rabbit, and bury me deep in the nebular theory! Put me back into “a-b ab” and “I love, thou lovest.” No, no! (*weeps*) he will never come back, and I shall never, never be worried again! Dear old nuisance! he is gone to be dull in the arms of another!

OWEN (*aside, emerging from the arbor*). Aha! victory! at last! I have subdued her by the desperation of my retreat;

the determination I displayed in striking my tents has cowed her into a capitulation! What I failed to accomplish by force of arms has been achieved by the resolution of these two legs! Once more to the breach, my friends! as the the schoolmaster said when he called up the next class in flogging. (*Advances softly to the back of ADA's chair, and clasps his hands over her eyes. In a gruff voice*) Guess!

ADA. Is that you—Owen?

OWEN. Yes—Ada.

ADA. Come and tell me what Eva Trevelyan said, won't you?

OWEN (*releasing her eyes and bending over her*). She said that you loved me with all your heart, though you wouldn't own it for the world. Was that true, Ada?

ADA. You wouldn't have me say that Eva Trevelyan could be guilty of a falsehood?

OWEN (*aside*). Thank heaven, we are in Revelations at last! (*Aloud*) My dear girl! (*kissing her*) Now at last I stand upon the asymptote of happiness, even if I am outside of the golden hyperbola itself. (*Seating himself at her side*.)

ADA. O you dear old goose! must you make love out of the multiplication-table, and put up a compliment as you would a prescription?

OWEN. You shall teach me better, my dear. But even now there is one cloud upon the horizon of my hopes.

ADA. And what is that?

OWEN. That I cannot marry you as soon as I would. Fortescue has to-day made a clean breast to Miss Trevelyan; and she has put him upon his probation for six months, at the end of which she will marry him, if he is finally emancipated from his unfortunate habits. I saw him a few minutes since; he is full of enthusiasm over the project, and bound to succeed, if love and devotion can save him. But at such a crisis

he has need of all his friends; enthusiasm is a good hammer, but a bad anvil: I feel that I can be of use to him in many ways, and, come what may, I'll not marry until he is fairly out of the toils.

ADA. And I love you all the better for it. But Owen, Owen, I have a bright idea! We will keep our engagement secret until the six months are over; it will be so delightful to have papa lecturing me twenty times a day for being too familiar with you! And you must keep up the joke; remember you are engaged to me, and can take any liberties you please. Begin at once, sir, do you hear! give me your arm—so—and bend your head a little more this way. Good! now saunter slowly along with me—not so fast!—and talk to me in a kind of animated murmur. Oh! this is charming!

(*Exeunt OWEN and ADA.*)

JOHN and MARY *issue from the shrubbery.*

MARY. John!

JOHN. Well, my dear?

MARY. Tell me what Eva Trevelyan said, quick! and give me a kiss afterwards.

JOHN. She said you was fonder of tripe and onions than anything in the world, only you would never own to it.

MARY. For shame, sir! John, I think we might walk about a little, too, just to show that we're engaged. This old coverlet will do for a shawl (*hanging it over her arm*). There, I think my figure's as good as Miss Carroll's, any day of the week; and I'm sure your legs are more genteel than Mr. Stuckey's. But you must have a cane—the spout of your watering-pot is just the thing—(*pulling it out and thrusting it into JOHN's hand*). Now come along!

They walk fantastically to and fro, carrying the coverlet and tin spout; turning suddenly, they meet OWEN and ADA face to face. ADA and MARY scream and fall fainting; the men receive them in their arms.
Curtain.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Garden before CARROLL'S house. Enter ADA, in bridesmaid's costume, and carrying a hand-mirror.*

ADA. Only a week to the wedding! heigho! I wish it were my wedding instead of Eva Trevelyan's! Ha! ha! that's a true bridesmaid's wish; for the sole office of a bridesmaid is to add a triumphant relish to the bride's breakfast—just as a boy in the first flush of trousers will surround himself with a chorus of younger boys in petticoats. Well, well, matrimony and breeches are both hollow and delusive joys, I fear. The boy changes his clothes but not his sex, just as we change our names but not our natures; and sooner or later with both of us fate never fails to tug at the stoutest button, and care frets a hole in every pocket. But the parson's misfits pinch worse than the tailor's, and his customers are not allowed to change their bargains—more's the pity! There ought to be a clause in the marriage license—"Satisfaction given, or the money returned." Trousers have many advantages, I see; I pant to possess them.—But (*gazing at her glass*) why do I talk of trousers, when this dress fits me like my skin—and becomes me a great deal better, I am sure. This corsage is a miracle of imagination; the skirt is an inspiration; and what a tender melancholy displays itself in the bonnet! 'Tis wonderful what modesty these long white veils lend a woman! I feel positively infuriated with modesty;—it is oppressive, suffocating. I vow I could almost find it in my heart to take Eva's place at the altar next week; for Mr. Fortescue has grown perfectly charming since he gave up his odious habits—I really didn't think it was in him. But what would poor Owen say? I

positively must tell papa of our engagement; it's a shame to keep him in the dark any longer. There's no time like the present. Papa! papa! come quick, I have something to show you!

CARROLL (*within*). Yes, yes, my dear, I am coming, I am coming; yes, yes.

Enter CARROLL, with a newspaper.

I am coming, my dear, (*sits*) I am coming, I am—God bless me! the country is ruined, ruined, utterly ruined!

ADA. What, again, papa? 'tis only a fortnight since the last time it was ruined.

CAR. Ruined, ruined,—ru—! Ah, these are awful times we live in! awful, truly awful! Listen, my love! (*reads*)

“Spelter continues flat, at $2\frac{1}{4}$ d a $2\frac{1}{4}$ d, and quotations have a downward tendency.”

Spelter flat again! And look at linseed! (*reads*)

“Linseed is dull, with scarcely any demand, and prices are unchanged.”

There, what do you think of that? And wheat cheaper than at any time since '52!—Oh, it is intolerable! it must end in—As I said to little Tom Shaw, last autumn—prices were falling like the leaves—Tom, says I, Shaw, says I, mark my words, in less than ten centuries this country will be plunged into a state of universal—dear me, dear me, dear me!

ADA (*aside*). Heavens, will he never get his marketing done? (*Aloud*) Papa, I want you to look at my bridesmaid's dress— isn't it sweet?

CAR. Very sweet, my dear, very sweet, very—What, what? (*reads*)

“Crnde turpentine remains quiet at $8/3$ for yellow dip, $8/4$ for virgin.”

Eight and fourpence for virgin! And yet Fortescue must

go and plunge headlong into matrimony in such times as these ! I call it sheer madness ! why it is flying in the very face of the quotations !

ADA. To be sure, papa ! he ought to enter a convent, and stay till you are satisfied with the condition of things—which will never be (*aside*). But do look at my costume again, and tell me what you think of it.

CAR. One moment, my love ! Come, that's something, at any rate—whiskey is better—you will be glad to hear that whiskey is better, my dear. And now what can we do for you ?—oh, yes, your dress—very clean and handsome, I am sure—whiskey is better—but don't you think your jewelry is a little showy, my love ? A young woman should have no ornaments but her eyes, you know—but your eyes never were anything to boast of, my poor child ! Ah ! you never knew your grandmother Jochebed !

ADA (*aside*). Mercy on us ! what gossips 'men are ! they have no head for affairs. (*Aloud*) Papa dear, I could easily change this into a bride's toilet. Just a little alteration in the train, and a yard or two more in the veil, and there you are.

CAR. That reminds me, my dear, of a good thing of poor Tim Sheppard's. Tim's wife, you know, was a hideous old hag, painted up to the roots of her hair—she used to lay it on with a whitewash-brush, I think—and her arms were like two drumsticks cased in leather. Well, she had her portrait painted in evening-dress—quite a large area of exposure, don't you know ?—and when the likeness came home, she wasn't satisfied, and wanted to return it. "Oh," says Tim—Tim was a good fellow, and always very full—(*pauses*.)

ADA. Very full, papa !

CAR. Yes, yes, my dear—very full of good spirits, you know

—"Oh," says Tim, "lay it aside, lay it aside; we can always"—
(*pauses.*)

ADA, Yes, papa.

CAR. What was I saying?—oh, yes,—(*laughs*) "we can always sell it to a public-house for the sign of the Plasterer's Arms." Ha! ha! ha! "Oh," says Tim, "lay it aside, lay it aside; we can always sell it to a public-house for the sign of the Plasterer's Arms."

ADA. Ha! ha! ha! exquisite! (*Aside*) This is martyrdom! I must give myself the *coup de grâce* at once. (*Aloud*) Papa, what do you think? I have had an offer of marriage.

CAR. Have you indeed, my dear? I hope you accepted him, I hope you accepted him. Who was it, by-the-bye?

ADA. It was Mr. Owen Stuckey, papa, and I have accepted him, if you will only say yes.

CAR. Ha! Mr. Stuckey! indeed! Mr. Owen Stuckey! to be sure! I noticed him kissing you the other day, but I didn't think—Well, well, well! Mr. Owen Stuckey, is it? so, so! aha!

ADA. You seem surprised, papa; don't you think Mr. Stuckey is a good match for me? He is very fond of me, papa dear.

CAR. Why yes, I was a little surprised, I own; Mr. Stuckey, you know, is—(*pauses*)—such an as—(*pauses.*)

ADA. Such an ass, papa! what do you mean? I am sure Owen has remarkable abilities, and as for his—

CAR. You mistake me, my dear; you decapitate my most innocent words with your interruptions. I was about to say that Mr. Stuckey is an astonishingly clever fellow—a little unsuited for you, don't you see? You are furnished like your poor mother in the matter of brains—you have too many to lose,

but not enough to keep.—Fine day, isn't it? crops want rain, though.

ADA (*aside*). What a bear papa is! and for my part, I am a perfect Grizzle! (*Aloud*) But, papa, tell me, do you approve of Mr. Stuckey as a husband for me? Do you think—that——

CAR. Well, my dear, this is a matter which—(*nods*)—requires a great deal—(*nods*)—of de—liber—(*falls asleep*.)

ADA. O how provoking! I believe he would fall asleep in the dentist's arms! Papa! papa! No use! sound as a deacon. Papa! papa! papa! Moral suasion won't do for him, I see; I must convert him with an apostolic blow or two. (*Shakes him by the shoulders*). My dearest papa, (*shaking him*) let me invite you (*shaking him*) to be good enough to proceed (*shaking him*) with your entertaining remarks (*shaking him*). Ah, now he is convinced—but my arm will ache for a week.

CAR. (*awaking*). —ation, my love; deliberation and reflection. I reflected many a long day before I made your poor mother a Mrs.;—I wish I had reflected longer! But tell me, is your heart really set on this young man?

ADA. Yes, indeed, papa; I am bound to have him.

CAR. Then I give my consent freely; for if I don't, you'll contrive to do without it. Give a woman plenty of rope, I say; she'll very soon come back and beg for the curb.

ADA. You dear little papa! (*kissing him*) you are a very good soul, after all.

CAR. Well, well, my dear, we will go into the house and talk it over quietly. But I could wish—I could wish—I could wish—that ginger and molasses—

(*Exeunt.*)

Enter ERNEST and JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. So this is the cage that contains the little love-bird? Pretty enough, upon my soul.

ERNEST. Yes, and this garden is Eden, defended only by laughing Cupids with quivers full of sunbeams.

JOS. And a snug little homestead it is, for people who like innocence and simplicity. But who comes? this must certainly be your she.

Enter EVA.

ERNEST. My dear girl! you come upon us as noiselessly as the moon. This is my cousin Joseph, Eva;—Miss Trevelyan, Mr. Lorimer.

EVA. Welcome, sir, to our simple fields and folds! You are from the city?

JOS. From the city, madam; a wolf that has lost his way. But I could find it in my heart to pare my claws and profess the sheeps' religion, if all shepherdesses are like yourself. (*Aside*) She really is devilish pretty! A cat *may* look at a king, they say—but a man *must* look at a pretty girl.

EVA. But a sincere convert, Mr. Lorimer, must renounce his good taste along with the other pomps and vanities.

ERNEST. O, Lorimer is only in his part. They say he hunts the sex by *battue*, and leaves a broken heart in every bush.

JOS. Not at all; I am the sex's victim; the pangs of despised love are chronic with me, and all my respirations are sighs. (*Aside*) Modest, too; I like that. A woman who has lost her modesty is like a cat that has lost her sense of cleanliness; with both of them it is but a step from the fireside to the gutter. I like to drink my wine from a clean glass, I confess.

ERNEST. Every man ought to marry, Lorimer; for it is his duty to make at least one woman wretched, in revenge for having been brought into the world by a woman. This race of miserable sinners must be propagated and preserved for the glory of God, my good sir; would you thwart the divine pur-

poses by permitting the euthanasia of humanity? Go to, go to! take a wife, and avenge yourself upon your posterity!

EVA. Shall we see you at Mr. Fortescue's assembly to-night, Mr. Lorimer?

JOS. You will, madam, if my obscure person is visible out of your illuminated eyes.

ERNEST. Then will you pardon us for a little while, old fellow? Lovers have the privilege of inhospitality, you know; and I am sure you are longing to smoke a cigar. *Au revoir!*

(*Exeunt ERNEST and EVA.*)

JOS. (*lighting cigar*). That girl is altogether too pretty to be permitted to lower herself by marrying—and least of all with a fossil like Fortescue. I must make haste to rescue her from such a calamity; and if I am too late to save her from the altar, I can at least endeavor to reconcile the poor victim to her fate. I am truly catholic in my tastes—I like them of all complexions, all temperaments, thick or thin, married or single; if they are only female, I find them charming. Henry the Eighth was right; he could kill off his wives as fast as they became troublesome, and yet he contented himself with six. Few men with his privileges would have displayed his moderation. For me, I could dispose of a wife per week with ease; it would be delightful to have a fresh young girl served up with one's muffins and “Saturday Review.” I use a woman as I do this cigar—a few delicious whiffs, and the devil take the stub! But then there's Fortescue—he's as jealous as Juno, and horribly fierce when you twist his tail; he's my cousin too—ha! ha! ha!—but I'll contrive to cozen him in spite of his teeth! I have it! I'll wager she doesn't know that Ernest takes opium; he was always damnably sly about it, I remember. I'll snatch the first occasion of telling the poor girl; it is my simple duty to do so, much as it may pain

me ; and that ought to break off the match, I think. It shall be done to-night ; I'll invite her into the library while the concert is going on, and tell her there ; it will require some dexterity, but I can accomplish it ; the devil knows how to give good advice, and he can so sugar the pill that the patient will swallow it without a grimace. I am sorry for poor Fortescue, of course ; but I sacrifice him in the cause of morality ; the race of Roman fathers is not yet extinct. Fortescue is welcome to take his pleasure, to be sure ; but when it comes to a question of lawfully begotten issue, I protest in the name of humanity. He may sow all the wild oats he pleases, but he shan't raise up seed to supplant me in my inheritance ! What does he want with posterity ? hasn't he got me ? and does he suppose I shall sit tamely by and see my vested interests demolished with a pap-spoon ? Not while I have a brain to conceive stratagems, and a tongue to achieve them ! By-the-bye, I must endeavour to compromise the Trevelyan in some way ; I shall have to extinguish the lights in the library by accident and let the servants discover us, or arrange some little innocent artifice of that kind ; and then I think the affair will march.

And then, unless the omens all deceive,

I'll play the devil with this blue-eyed Eve !

(Exit.)

SCENE II.—*A room in ERNEST'S house. Enter JEROME, with a ladle.*

JEROME. Heaven be praised ! all goes well ! My supper will be a masterpiece ! a veritable Da Vinci ! There is nothing more to fear ; I may sing *Te Deum* in advance : *(sings)*

Hey-diddle diddle ! the cat and the fiddle !

Yes, yes, such as I am, I think I have achieved somewhat to-day. Ah ! what a supper I have created ! classic, superb, divine ! worthy of great Jove and amiable Amphitryon. Noth-

ing nutritious ! no, no ! if people will feed, let them go elsewhere ; that is their affair ; I am an artist, not a stoker ; my Muse is ethereal, celestial. They must mortify their carnal affections if they come to my table ; I'll not be a pander to any man's animal appetite. But one must live, I suppose ;—so they may get their dinners beforehand, in a decent privacy ; a hungry man cannot stay to enjoy the naked sublimity of a *consommé*, or the airy grace of an *à la bonne femme*. *O dii immortales !* who am I, that I should be chosen to introduce to the world my epos of to-night ?—a sucking-pig garnished with olives ! Ah ! the hero ! sleeping like an infant Apollo among his bays ! And it was I who conceived him ! I, Peter Paul Jerome ! By Pollux ! I tremble when I think of the virgin purity, the sweet sensibility, the awful and exquisite loveliness of my adorable salad ! The whole of civilization is contained in that salad ! But I am only casting pearls before—ah me ! There is Mr. Fortescue, for example ; well, well ! we cannot all be great ; stars must be of different magnitudes, or the heavens would become tedious. Then there is Mr. Stuckey—the barbarian ! he eats like an atheist ; he has no reverence for the most sacred mysteries of my calling ; well or ill done, roast or boiled, *vol-au-vent* or *croquette*, all's one to him ; he even dares to be ribald at the expense of our terminology, and blasphemes us by tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee ! Ah ! he is a dangerous man ! society will suffer at his hands yet ; I say no more. Bah, these English ! they have no souls ! Briton as I am, I could denationalize myself for the sake of culture. They do not condemn genius in fair France, where I learnt my art and my rhetoric—would I were well there ! but there must be apostles and martyrs, I suppose. Stay, I have forgotten my letter ! (*Pulls out letter and reads it*) So ; here at last is a tribute to virtue ; Mr. Carroll's cook—a good hon-

est fellow, but prosaic—asks me to assist him at the wedding-breakfast. Assist him! yes, I will assist him as Addison did Steele; it is *aut Cæsar aut nullus* with me. But I will accept his retainer—yes, yes—and then—a peerage or Westminster Abbey!—Ah, here comes Jane—a pretty creature, if it were not for her truncated nose. Poor girl, I think she aspires to my hand.

Enter SERVANT.

Ah, Jane, you are longing to see my preparations for supper, I know; well then, my good girl——

SERVANT. To the devil with your kickshaws—I have to dress my ladies!

(Slaps his face and exit.)

JER. A blow! and an insult to my religion! I will have blood for this! blood! Give me a spit, there!

(Exit.)

SCENE III.—*A room in the FORTESCUE manor-house, brilliantly lighted. In the centre is a band of musicians, who from time to time strike up martial airs and compositions befitting a festival. A company of guests is making the circuit of the stage, two by two; others stand or sit near the walls and windows. As each pair approaches the front of the stage their conversation is audible, and continues to be until they begin to recede.*

FIRST LADY. Don't you enjoy this overture to Taunhäuser? There is such a *verve* about it, such an *élan*——

FIRST GENTLEMAN. So there is; so much fizz, you know, so much go!

FIRST LADY. And yet, though it fairly *brille* with *feux d'artifice*, it is without one *soupçon* of a *coup de théâtre*.

FIRST GENT. Like a fellow I know that's always a howling swell, and yet never has anything loud about him, don't you know?

FIRST LADY. Ah, when I am listening to delicious music, I feel inspired; space, time, thought, dissolve themselves into the infinite, the eternal, the unutterable; I experience all the emotions of a canary!

FIRST GENT. Yes, quite so; music does make a fellow very chirpy; and whenever the band plays Rule Britannia, I feel as if I wanted to crow, you know.

(They pass on.)

SECOND GENT. How very distressing! Last Tuesday, I think you said?

SECOND LADY. Last Tuesday evening, at a quarter past seven.

SECOND GENT. At a quarter past seven! How shocking! And on a Tuesday evening! This is frightful! frightful!

SECOND LADY. Yes, and Mrs. Willoughby's housemaid—an exceedingly intelligent young woman, quite a superior person for one in her station—says that their behavior was most indelicate!

SECOND GENT. You don't say so, my dear lady! Well, well, well! But her manners were certainly very forward; and I always thought the attitude of her neck was extremely pronounced.

SECOND LADY. Yes, and the pose of her wrist was positively indecent!

(They pass on.)

THIRD GENT. Mrs. Taylor not popular in the village? You astonish me! Why, she devotes her whole time to the composition of charitable petticoats!

THIRD LADY. Mere sacks, my dear sir, not cut in the fashion at all! She is the very Inquisitor-General of artificial flowers—cries fee-faw-fum to a furbelow—and makes a mad bull of herself at the sight of a red ribbon! She has the soul of a beadle and the taste of a bat.

THIRD GENT. But charity covers a multitude of sins, they say.

THIRD LADY. Other people's charity, then ; her own, like her skirts, is too scanty to hide her cloven feet. Then she is ill-favored and religious—two faults that poor people cannot endure ; they are willing to accept charity, but they must add their own pepper and vinegar. After all, her good actions are only good acting ; she is never in earnest but when she plays the devil.

THIRD GENT. Will you ridicule me to your next partner in this way ?

THIRD LADY. Most certainly I shall ; the absent are always wrong, you know.

THIRD GENT. You are candid, at any rate. Will you not tell me to my face what you think of me ? I promise not to be offended.

THIRD LADY. What, tell the truth in cold blood ? The case is not so desperate, I hope. We have refined away all the rougher virtues, my dear sir, just as we no longer carry swords in public ; the beneficent despotism of Mrs. Grundy has infibulated us all in order that we may co-exist in comfort ; our claws remain, but they must be veiled in velvet. One must protect Society by means of these decent fictions ; expose her to the truth, and you inoculate her with barbarism. Speak the truth to a man's face ! I trust I have been taught better ! you forget, sir, that I have a reputation to lose.

(They pass on.)

FOURTH GENT. Not know that gentleman, Mary ! Why, it is John Stebbins ! the illustrious John Stebbins !

FOURTH LADY. Ah yes, indeed ; the illustrious John Stebbins ; to be sure !

FOURTH GENT. Architect of the pedestal of the statue of Martin Tupper at Burton-on-Trent, you remember.

FOURTH LADY. An architect, is he? What a horrible squint he has!

FOURTH GENT. Squint, my dear! He possesses a remarkable complexity of vision, it is true; but it is necessary that an architect should squint.

FOURTH LADY. Well, well—but look at his nose! all nostrils, like a baboon's!

FOURTH GENT. His nose is eminently Socratic, my dear, and performs the functions of an umpire between the contending eyes with an admirable impartiality. The nose is a very good nose, *quâ* nose; what more would you have?

FOURTH LADY. But don't you think his red hair is unbecoming?

FOURTH GENT. He has red hair, I grant you. I have no excuse for the hair; but a man of his profession is bound to be thoroughly read, you know.

FOURTH LADY. Then you admire his freckles, I suppose?

FOURTH GENT. No, Mary, I condone them. A creator of the beautiful must himself be fair; and the fairer a man is, the more freckles he has. Stebbins's freckles are the parasites of his beauty and the conditions of his immortality.

FOURTH LADY. Well, George, your aunt Randolph has freckles enough, I am sure; but I could never see that she was more immortal than other people. Then there's my cousin Robert at Wadleigh—he has no talents in spite of his freckles.

(*They pass on.*)

FIFTH GENT. What odious cattle those Verriers are! Why does Fortescue invite us to meet them? The man is a mere colossus of meat; his nose is a pope's-nose, his eyes float in melted butter, and his cheeks are like raw beefsteaks—and rump-steaks at that. Pah!

FIFTH LADY. Don't be so coarse, Charles, if you please ! The man is well enough ; he is clean and fresh, at any rate ; but the woman is most repulsive, I admit. And after all, her face is the best part of her ; her nose is not frail, at any rate ; and her value to poor Mr. Verrier is just two shillings and sixpence.

FIFTH GENT. Why two-and-sixpence ?

FIFTH LADY. Because a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, my dear.

FIFTH GENT. The woman will pass ; she is not the most polished of the ornamental sex, it is true ; but she will pass. But her husband is detestable, by Jove !

FIFTH LADY. Well, Charles, he has a very good figure, I am sure ; and those curly buff whiskers of his are simply sweet. Then he must have been somebody, you know ; they say he was a Major in the Guards.

FIFTH GENT. He indeed ! a drum-major, my dear, in the Garde Mobile, which is French for the Running Foot, I take it. I tell you the fellow is mere ox ; he ought to be shut up in a stall, and fed on cauliflowers, or whatever it is that cows eat. It is an offence against decency to put him in the public eye.

FIFTH LADY. Yes, we know your taste ; you like a dark complexion and a yard of waist, like that swarthy Miss Higgins—a perfect mop of a girl, with her black head and her straight figure. I wonder you have the face to allude to her in my presence. For shame, sir !

(They pass on.)

SIXTH GENT. She was a Mumford, one of the Floyd Mumfords of Berkshire. The eldest Miss Mumford, you remember, married a Wickham ; Worcester Wickham, the last of the Wickhams of Uxwood. Ah, that was a fine old family ! one

of the good old English stock ! There are none such nowadays.

SIXTH LADY. No, indeed, Colonel ! I recollect poor Worcester Wickham well ; there was such a distinguished air about him, though they do say he had more ancestors than brains.

SIXTH GENT. The better for him ! What does a gentleman want with brains ? There was a family for you ! What a pedigree ! what an escutcheon ! The eldest son was always christened Worcester, and always married a Somers or a Gatherwood. Fine English gentlemen every one of them ! none of your pestilential modern socialism about them ! For generations all the boys were idiots, and all the girls deaf and dumb.

SIXTH LADY. Ah, Colonel, times are sadly altered ! The Robinsons that own the place now are very different from the Wickhams. There's no noble imbecility running in their blood—the vulgar tradespeople !

SIXTH GENT. No, indeed, they are all sane enough, confound them ! Why there's not even a parson in the family !

SIXTH LADY. My dear sir, what is to become of the Church and State, if such things are allowed to go on ?

(They pass on.)

ERNEST *(to OWEN, who is with him)*. Yes, yes, at last I am happy ; I can smoke a calumet with the gods, and return the Thunderer's nod with a smile. And as for you, my friend, I shall always feel that, next to my dearest Eva, I owe my salvation to you. There is more virtue in marriage than in all the other sacraments united ; even with the shadow and perfume of it my soul has been strengthened and refreshed.

OWEN. You were always horribly heterodox, my dear fellow ; you forget that we have reformed all that since Henry the Eighth's time. Matrimony is no longer a sacrament with

us; we have but one means of grace left nowadays—and that is so potent a chrism, that even St. Peter's keys must be oiled with it.

ERNEST. And what sacrament is that, pray?

OWEN. Patrimony, my good sir! patrimony!
(*They pass on.*)

EVA (*to JOSEPH*). Poetic license, sir; love does not enlarge the heart and quicken the sympathies; far from it. If I love the man more, I love the world less; if I am warm to him, it is because I freeze for others; just as the pine-tree grows green and thrives, while in its shadow it creates a desert.

JOSEPH. Owen Stuckey would tell you, applying the theory of the conservation of energy to the science of the heart, that you were originally endowed with so much lovingkindness and no more, and that you could not increase its volume, though you might change its direction or multiply its currents. And I, in my own person, must tell you that it would be well if you could change—but my tongue is running away with me.

EVA. What do you mean, sir? I conjure you to——

JOSEPH. Hush, hush! I have a revelation to make to you—but not now, not here. See, they are going to supper; we must follow, or we shall be missed. Meet me in the library in an hour's time, and I will tell you all in private. Not a word! Will you permit me?

Scene closes.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.—*Library in the FORTESCUE house, dimly lighted, and opening upon the lawn, as before. Enter AGNES upon the lawn, approaching the house.*

• AGNES (*sings*).

My lodging is on the cold ground,
And very hard is my fare,
But that which grieves me most of all——

Many a sore mile have I come to reach this door, and now I daren't go in! I'm sure the prodigal son's heart would have failed him at the last, if his old father hadn't seen him afar off. Ah, if Mr. Fortescue was here, he would take me back and forgive me, I know, for he was always the kind gentleman to his dependents. Dear old house! I could kiss every stone in your walls and every pane in your windows, I could! O the black time I've seen since I stole out of your doors to hide the shame that I knew was coming upon me! Joseph Lorimer, Joseph Lorimer, the vengeance of God light on you for the wrong you did me! Many's the hard road and the sharp stone, the bitter cold night and the bitter cold look I've had to suffer since then! My dear little baby was born in a pin-fold; and how I've kept him alive till this day, the blessed Lord only knows! 'Tis past telling how often the poor creature has gone a-whimpering all day for the nourishment I couldn't, couldn't give him; it did cut my heart, it did, to see him begging so pitiful with his little eyes! and glad I've often been to share a crust with the dogs in the kennel. And at night I've had to snatch him up and run because I heard the drunken men roaring along the lanes, and the heart in the breast of me would be churning for fear. But the men were kinder than the women, after all; the drunkenest man that ever staggered has more feeling for a wretch like me than the sweetest lady that ever sat in silk; and if it hadn't been for my baby's little twining fingers, I should have died in the roads long ago. And now here I am at the door, and dursn't go in. (*Music within*) Music! there's a ball in the house then; I'll creep in somewhere and hide until it's all over. Here's the library window standing open; what if I venture iuside? But O, I do hope they'll take good care of my baby at the public-house, as they promised me to! (*Enters library, and screens*

herself behind the window-curtains. Laughter within ; LORIMER'S voice heard among the rest) Joseph Lorimer here ! My God ! Then there's black deceit here ! there's wicked seduction here ! Hush ! he's coming !'

Enter JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. My little pullet hasn't come, I see. A woman that can't be punctual for an intrigue has no good salt in her blood—she forgets the respect she owes to the devil ; she's hardly worth the trouble of ruining, I suspect. Let us have light ! I hate making love in the dark, like a tomcat. (*Goes to the chandelier and raises the light—then turning, perceives AGNES*)—Agnes, by the eternal God !

AGNES. Ay, Agnes, by the eternal God !

(JOSEPH rushes to the window, leaps out and exit. *Curtain.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Vestibule in the FORTESCUE manston, out of which other apartments open ; a flight of steps leads from the lawn to the main entrance, and the outer door stands wide open. Enter JOSEPH, from a side room.*

Jos. Lord ! what an escape I had last night ! 'Tis seldom I lose my presence of mind as I did when that girl stepped out from behind the curtains ; I am rarely at a loss for a lie, thank God ! but this shock struck me so suddenly that, pst ! I went flying through the window like a football ! Well, at any rate, I am forewarned, and if she comes prowling around the house again, I shall show my teeth. My little plan to entrap the Trevelyan miscarried sadly last night ; but I have conceived a better one. I find Fortescue has destroyed every dram and every grain of opium he possessed ; he hasn't kept

enough to send a dormouse to sleep. But I am equal to the occasion; it shall never be said of Joseph Lorimer that he hadn't a bottle at a friend's service. (*Pulls phial from his pocket*) There it is; solution of opium; best to be had for money; the mere smell of it warranted to make a man snore at rifle range. I told the apothecary I wanted the best; if I have a fault, it is that I am over-generous; I spill the wine of my bounty on the sucking sand, and give an udder to every palm. This is my wedding-present to Ernest Fortescue. I shall just clap it on the table in his room, and leave the cork out; if he can withstand the sight and smell of it, I'll turn monk. If he is worthy the name of a man, he is bound to make a beast of himself when such a temptation is thrown in his way; and surely that must break off the match, or at any rate postpone it. I know human nature as the devil does; we are all ripe rogues, ready to fall into the tempter's basket at a touch; damnation is too good for us, that's certain. (*Exit into an apartment on the right of the hall, then returns empty-handed*) The noose is baited! the devil will have another client soon. Ha! ha! ha! Well, why not? I am tempting him for the good of his soul's health; if he's fool enough to succumb to the seductions of a glass bottle and a dose of stinking physic, he has no business to marry; what should such a weakling do with a wife? I feel it to be my sacred duty to rescue his unborn babes from their unfortunate paternity; I will be a father to them myself, cost what it may. I can whip the devil round the stump, never fear! it wasn't for nothing that I studied theology at St. Bees.—By Jove, here comes Agnes with a baby in her arms—my child, I suppose; ha! ha! ha! Let her come! I know my cue.

Enter AGNES from the lawn, carrying an infant.

That's a fine little fellow you have there, my good woman; just like his father, I presume? they all are.

AGNES. He is your own son, Joseph Lorimer, and well you know it!

Jos. I! you do me too much honor, my dear creature; you mistake me for the footman, I suppose. Not but what I should like to be better acquainted with you, my dear, (*attempting to pinch her cheek*).

AGNES. Stand back, sir! don't dare to lay a finger on me! I am come here to know if you will do me right for all the sorrow I've supped because of you?

Jos. Can it be possible that I have unwittingly injured a human being? Here, my good woman! (*offers money*) here is half-a-sovereign for you; that ought to buy me a plenary indulgence for all offences, past and future.

AGNES. O God! money to me! Not for the world, sir! Will money buy me back my virtue? will money wash the mould off my good name? No, sir! I may have given my soul away, like a simple fool, but I'll not take money for it now!

Jos. But, my dear, if you have lost your reputation, as you say you have, I fail to see how I can be of service to you. I should advise you to join some decent Methodist congregation, and profess religion; that seems to be the only chance left you. (*Whistles*).

AGNES. My God, this is too much! O! O! O! (*Bursts into tears*).

Jos. (*aside*). Gad, here's Fortescue! now there'll be the devil to pay!

Enter ERNEST, L.

ERNEST. What does all this mean? What, Agnes? is it you,

my poor girl? we have missed you sadly; and is this your child?

AGNES, Yes, sir, it is myself, and this is my little baby. But O, Mr. Fortescue, (*falling on her knees*)—O my dear master, take me back again, take me back, for the sake of the sweet little sucking child!

ERNEST. Take you back, Agnes? to be sure I will, my poor creature. Hush! hush! don't cry! (*Raises her to her feet.*)

AGNES. God bless you, Mr. Fortescue! you have a kind heart! a kind heart! Ah, if all folk were only like you, this would be a happy world!

ERNEST (*aside*). Heaven forbid! (*Aloud*) But answer me this, Agnes; who was your betrayer?

AGNES. There he stands! (*pointing to JOSEPH.*)

ERNEST. What, Lorimer! Is this true, sir?

JOS. Eh? why, upon my soul I can't say. It's very possible. (*Laughs.*)

ERNEST. Answer me plainly, sir! I want the naked truth.

JOS. O, hang it, Fortescue! spare my blushes, you know! Please remember that truth is never naked nowadays, in good society; she is simply *décolletée*. But I shall plead an alibi to this terrible indictment. They say that the human frame is decomposed and recomposed every few weeks or so: now, some predecessor in my office may have had a hand in this little affair; for myself, I know nothing of it except by tradition.

ERNEST. You are a—stop, you are my guest;—but when you shall have left this house, sir, I shall possess the right to call you a villain. Have you no grace? do you not repent of your treachery to this woman?

JOS. Repent? of course I do; my sole cleaves to the dust every time I cross the street. For the rest, I am a consequence, not a cause; a man is what his environment makes him—and

as my tailor always will cut my waistcoats like so many balloons, my habits are bound to be loose. I, sir, am an instrument in the hands of Providence; he that made me must answer for me—I wash my hands of myself.

ERNEST. At least, sir, you will surely take this poor girl to wife, and so make her what reparation you may for the irretrievable wrong you have done her? It is true she is not of your station—but neither was she of your station when you stooped to betray her. You will not refuse to wear the prize you have been at the pains to win?

Jos. Marry her? ha! ha! ha! very good! Why, if I were to marry all the girls I have enjoyed, I should need a seraglio and the revenues of an empire!

ERNEST. You will quit my house.

Jos. I shall, sir!

(*Exit.*)

ERNEST. Why, Agnes, your feet are bleeding! you must be in torture, my child. (*Rings bell*) I will see that you are cared for.

Enter SERVANT.

Jane, here is Agnes, your old companion; put her to bed and nurse her well, if you please; she is sick and suffering, as you see—and let her baby be carefully tended also. (*Aside*) And see that you do not reproach her with her misfortunes, Jane!

AGNES. The Lord reward you, sir!

(*Exeunt AGNES and SERVANT.*)

ERNEST. This villain waxes fat on fornication,

And heaven withholds her lightnings, while the just,

Goaded by conscience for each peccadillo,

Wrinkle and waste and die. How fresh and fine

He goes among his victims! their salt tears

Make his complexion shine, and from their blood
His curling hair drinks lustre ; such as he
Are Fortune's darlings, the elect of men.
You fathers that would see your children thrive,
Take them and bind them for apprentices
To the most noble Belial ; they shall find him
A mild and easy master, one that loves
To see his pupils fat and full of mirth ;
And if they do not spur too furiously
The freedom that he gives, they may achieve
Renown and happiness and hale old age.
And though the wages of the place are death,
It is the market price ; death, like the rain,
Falls upon just and unjust equally.
All the sweet virtues of Saint Wilberforce
Cannot embalm him ; he is just as rotten
As George the Fourth and that lascivious crew.
What would you have ?

(Exit R.)

Re-enter JOSEPH.

Jos. Poor Fortescue ! what a weight of dignity he carries ! he puts me constantly in mind of His Highness the King of Spades ! Pshaw ! what a to-do about a servant-wench ! But what an ass I was to let the girl blubber and rouse the whole house ! I might have known that half-a-sovereign was of no use ; I ought to have made it a five-pound note, and have done with it. After all, society is to blame, not I ; if the line of descent were only traced through the mother, and bastards were supported from the public purse, all would go well, and the women would have a chance to be happy. It is to that end I have labored, and I trust not in vain. Well ! I must get out of this house, I suppose ; but I hope before long to

return as its master.—Stay! here comes the enemy! I must wait and put a spoke in her little wheel.

Enter EVA, from the lawn.

EVA. Good-morrow, friend! where did your worship hide
After the ball? I sought you high and low,
But to no purpose.

Jos. Pardon me, good lady!
A sudden tumult of the ancient Adam
Compelled me to retire—it was heaven's warning
Against the iniquity of midnight crabs.
But since I have the sufferance of your ear,
What if I, like a dog that guards your honor,
Begin to bark of danger?

EVA. You may speak.

Jos. Then, without whereas or preamble, thus:
You are affianced to a gentleman
Whose noble nature and whose probity
It were as much an insult to bepraise
As 'twere to hang upon his lordly oaks -
The frippery of a lap-dog; yet withal,
As ev'n the straightest pine-tree hath a crook,
He hath his faults.

EVA. Ay, but these very faults
Help make a man of him—without their presence
He were inhuman. Virtues, friend, and vices
Are accidents of fortune, which the gods
Send like the storms and sunbeams as they list:
The commonwealth of manhood levels all.
Humanity is loyal to itself,
Pledged like a bride for better or for worse
To its own weakness; what the gods have joined
We may not sunder.

JOS. (*aside*). Ha ! is she so lax ?
The better for my purpose ! (*Aloud*) True, sweet lady !
You are the mouthpiece of the Christian graces ;
And I were an unpardonable churl
To break upon your innocent repose
For a mere foible ; but our Ernest, lady,
(I speak it under favor) hath a vice
Will crush him, body and soul, I fear to heaven,
As I would crush a peasecod.

EVA. Spare your fears !
He needs them not ; he has reclaimed himself
These many months ; did you not mark the change ?
With what a noble and unclouded mien
He carries him ?

JOS. So ! I am glad to hear it ;
Heartily glad ; but yet—pray pardon me,
I know the world so well—the man is mortal,
And these temptations, like a mousing cat,
Will bide their time !

EVA. Sir, he has given his promise,
And that to me !

JOS. That ends all question, then.
But—do not chide a cousinly misgiving—
I have I know not what of premonition
(As all men have by times)—that while we speak,
Some brooding thunderbolt of destiny——

EVA. What, you are superstitious ? ha, ha, ha !
The augur Lorimer ! Pray, have the hens
Refused to peck ? Come, I shall soon convince you !

(*Throws open door R.; ERNEST is discovered lying on a couch in a blind stupor, with a half-empty phial near him.*)

O God, my husband !

This is no sight for me, sir ! close the door !

I may not spy upon his nakedness.

(JOSEPH closes the door.)

Not less for this, sir, yonder man concerns me ;

Such as he is, I love him, heart and soul.

I am his dog, sir ! think you it is fit

That I should snuff the master's hand that feeds me,

And if I find a blemish or a mole

Whine and reject my meat ? Not so, by heaven !

He is my lord ; and if he please to slay me,

His will be done ! so I may lick his hand,

I ask no better fortune. Look you, sir !

I will not play the devil's-advocate

Against a man that loves me as his life ;

There are enough of his own flesh and blood

To do him that kind office—I do take him

With all his faults ; there was no warranty

Of soundness in the faith, or Christian virtues,

When we exchanged our hearts ; and for my part,

I thank my God I am a woman still,

And not a barking Fury ; he it mine

To rock him on my bosom like a babe

Until he moans no more !

JOS. I hope, dear lady,

Your charity will not impute to me——

EVA. Sir, you have wronged me foully ! go in peace !

I leave you to the mercy of yourself.

(Exit JOSEPH.)

The lines have fallen to me in barren places,

And desolation is mine heritage !

(Exit.)

SCENE II.—ERNEST's library, as before. *He is discovered just emerging from the torpid condition in which the preceding scene left him; as he becomes conscious, he starts to his feet in frenzy.*

ERNEST. What, what! My God, again? O fool, fool, fool!

Damnable fool! Is this the end of all?

Why then let hell stretch wide her gory jaws

And snatch me from the sight of honest men,

Ay, and of rogues and whores, whose vilest deeds

Are godlike unto mine! There is no God!

Else would the lightning blast me where I stand

Black as my crime! Soft! soft! this is too harsh!

I wrong myself; some starveling cur, perchance,

Has ere to-day gone whining to the thief

For one sweet morsel of the meat he bears;

If such there be, I am his peer and brother,

And worthy to receive mine accolade

At Ketch the hangman's hands, and in the stocks

Be dubbed a Knight Companion of the Kennel!

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

They have me down; it is all over now!

Hard knees are on my throat; the good God screams

"He has it! he has got it!"—Yes, great Lord!

Turn back thy thumbs and bid the butcher smite!

See, dying I salute thee—with my spittle!

So then, one little sip of this elixir

Outvalues all that men account most dear!

There's no discovery of our fertile age

Can rival this! the world owes me a statue!

Simple as I stand here, I am the Gama

Of this Good Hope! not, unto us, O Lord!

I had a dream,^d There was an open park
With grass and many trees, and one broad lake
Dappled and rippling ; there were throngs of people,
And children happy in a holiday.
And on a terrace at the water's edge
There stood a stately and colossal figure
Like some great Nimrod from Assyrian mounds ;
Wings had it like a bird ; its head was human,
Bearded and crowned ; but all below the waist
Was like a brute, four-footed, lusty-limbed :
It was propelled on wheels, and had within it
An actor, for methought a play was toward—
A play without a plot, without a cue,
And real as death. And ever from the lake
There came a sound of song, faint as an echo,
—The merest beaded thread of melody—
Yet of such sweetness and imperious power
It might have drawn the very sun from heaven ;
But like a cliff the Nimrod on the shore
Stood, wreathed about with gold at every joint,
And mute as Memnon to the maiden moon !
Then quoth a woman in the throng to me,
“ 'Tis such and such a time since first the tune
“ Began to ring, and still he does not stir !
“ Well done, Sir Statue ! ”—And even as she spake
The people gave a shout, for the great figure
Was moving—down the slope with ponderous grace
It rolled, and onward till the waters rose
Breast-high about it—still it rolled, pursuing
A mist that hovered o'er the flying voice—
Sudden it stayed—the song ceased on the moment—
A boat was found, and with a line they hauled

Lie still, my battered warrior—my love!

How hot your forehead feels ! I'll cool it for you
With kisses, and perchance a tear or two !—
Look at my eyes ! I love you all the same
And all the while ! Do you take me for a wind
Changing with every season hot or cold ?
Nay, but my love is one perennial summer,
Suffused with sunshine and the song of birds !
My bosoms are not snows, but roses blowing
For you alone of men ! Are you content ?
Lie still ! my arms are strong ; do you like to feel
My hair against your cheek ? where shall I kiss you ?
I'll hold you fast, my darling, though the world
Crumble to ashes !

ERNEST. O you gracious gods !

I do beseech you ! let me pass away

In this supremest moment !

(*Curtain.*)

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Garden before CARROLL's house ; time, a little before sundown.*

Enter MARY.

MARY. What's keeping John, I wonder ? Poor Miss Eva must be wild to hear what the news is from the Squire's. Ever since Mr. Fortescue was taken with the fever two or three days before the wedding that was to have been, the poor thing has been fretting herself into her grave. She wanted to nurse him herself, and I should like to know who had a better right to—but Mr. Carroll put his foot down and forbid it—said it wasn't decent for a young lady to tend on a gentleman. Pshaw ! I wish there was no such thing as decency ! What sort of decency is it, if you please, that steps in between man and

wife, or them that's as good? that beats me, I confess. But she steals away in spite of him every now and then, and gets a spell at nursing; and they say it's wonderful how she takes to it. And when Mr. Fortescue was out of his head, and raving in the middle of his fits, he always knew her the moment she came, and quieted down like a lamb; and a pretty sight it was to see them, they do say. And it's my belief that if she was to catch the fever of him, she'd tend it and make much of it just as if it was one of her flowers—she dotes on everything that comes from Squire Fortescue. Where can John be, I wonder? I'll go and meet him, I believe.

(Exit.)

Enter EVA, from opposite side.

EVA. Look! look! the very heavens rejoice with me!

Half to the pole yon purple of the West

Rolls like a floor of polished amethyst

Veined with pure gold; the clear fair azure floats

Above me, and the stealing waves of wind

Touch me with coolness; the melodious birds

Pour from a hundred leafy minarets

Their curfew-carol, and the quiet kine

Move homeward from the milking. This fair eve

Pillows upon her breast the seventh sweet sun

Since that bright hour when Ernest was restored

To reason and to me. Yon rosy skies

Wear an auspicious color; I am sure

No grosser elements have struck their shadows

Across these kindly rays—peace and good will

Forged them of simple gold. 'Twere not amiss

To seek him out a modest flower or two

Such as the season yields ; poor though they be
He'll prize them as his life.

(EVA busies herself in composing a bouquet of flowers, and retires a little in order to do so. Then re-enter MARY with JOHN ; they converse without perceiving EVA, who overhears them.)

MARY. There—have done, sir, for shame ! And now tell me, what's the news from the house to-night ?

JOHN. Bad, my dear ; very bad.

MARY. Why, I thought he was up and about ?

JOHN. So he is ; goes all over the house, just as he used to, though they won't let him go out of doors ; and he talks just as reasonable as you or me. But he's in a bad way for all that.

MARY. How can that be, John ? if he gets better, he must be doing well, I should think.

JOHN. Why, the doctors say that he's a broken-down man. All the life has been milked out of him, they tell ; and one of these days he'll collapse like a sucked gooseberry, by reason of premature old age.

MARY. Old age ! what nonsense, John ! and he not thirty !

JOHN. Premature old age I said, my dear—old age forced out of season, you know. And what's worse than that, they say the least little shock may addle his brains again.

MARY. Ah ! that's bad ! that's bad !

JOHN. Bad it is, my love ! though to look at him now, he seems as sensible as a sheep-dog. By-the-bye, the servant up at the house was telling me that when he was light-headed in the fever he would have it that he was a knight—a knight, my darling, is one of the men they play with at the chess—it moves with a kind of a hop, step and jump, so—like a donkey with the hobbles on, you know, or a jackdaw when he starts to fly. Well, it seemed to him that he was forced to be always

a-lepping across and across over a big chess-board, from white square to black, from black square to white, hop-step-and-jump, hop-step-and-jump, all day long without ever a rest, and at every spring he would give a groan as if he felt the rowels raking into his flanks, so that 'twas pitiful to hear him!

MARY. Poor dear man! John, don't say a word to Miss Eva about this! let Mr. Carroll break it to her. Come in, come in!

(Exeunt JOHN and MARY into the house; EVA comes forward as they retire.)

EVA. God! this is sharp!

I cannot bear it! Am I old so soon,
Or does the round horizon rock with grief?
Ah gentle gods, I am a simple girl,
Fatherless, motherless; what have I done
That I must lose him too?

Enter OWEN.

Sweet friend, kind friend!
—You are my friend, I know; you always loved me;
Say that this news is false—say there is hope,
And I will bless you on my hended knees!
Are you my friend, or no?

OWEN. Would God, sweet lady,
That I could offer up my life for his!
Trust me, my heart bleeds for you!

EVA. Must he die?

'Tis pity of it! What! no more than pity?
'Tis pity when the sheaves are scant in field,
Or when a cup of costly ware is marred;
But when the noblest man in all the world
Is hunted by the hounds of destiny
And done to death, it is a crying scandal,

A deadly wrong, a blot upon the scutcheon
Of God himself ! So runs the world ! ha ! ha !
I make Almighty God my compliment
Upon his work ! Fortune is turned assassin ;
She lies in wait for every honest man
To stab him in the back and cut his purse,
That she may have the riches of his heart
To lavish on her minions.

Tell me, sir,
How does my Ernest meet this harsh decree ?
Bravely, I know !

OWEN. We have not told him yet ;
Nor shall we. Since his reason was restored,
He is resolved to end this desperate strife
With the temptations that have overthrown him,
By his own death ; and, knowing what I know,
I have encouraged and approved his purpose
To the utmost of my power.

EVA. What ! slay himself ?
O, this is morbid ! this is mere despair !

OWEN. Nay, call it hope ! a sane and healthy hope
That when this pendulum we name the heart
Ceases to swing, the arrest of motion checks
Fever and hunger and the thousand cares
That spur our wheels. But Ernest will not die
If you forbid it, lady ; he desires
To honor you in all things, and did send me
With many a tender message breathing love
To know your suffrage.

EVA. 'Tis a cruel honor ;
But I'll accept it. Tell me truly, friend !
Is't certain he will die ?

OWEN. It is not certain ;
There are some chances in his favor yet,
But few and feeble.

EVA. Well—my vote is cast
For honor and for death—he shall not say
His Eva held the fruit of desolation
All rosy to his lips ! Why, this is triumph !
My Ernest is a soldier whom the foe
Have beaten to his tent ; their taunting trumpets
Outscream the vultures on the bloody skirts
Of the torn field ; their serried bayonets
Gleam close at hand—but nevermore alive
My warrior shall be taken ! his free spirit
Soars like an untamed eagle to her crags,
And out of his unconquerable breast
The streamer of his blood flings high defiance !
Now by mine honor and my maidenhood
I swear I would not have it otherwise !

OWEN (*aside*). This firmness is too Stoic ; for my part
I'd rather see her shed a tear or two ;
She is not human. (*Aloud*) There is yet a matter
Untold, that I would fain have spared you, lady.

EVA. Ah me ! yon sanguine skies foreshadowed blood !
Say on, sir ! I will suck my fortune dry.

OWEN. When the rude soldiers of the Austrian Gessler
Had set the fatal fruit upon the head
Of the young Tell, they none the less in mercy
Muffled his eyes, for fear his childish gaze
Should pierce the father's heart and cause his hand
To lose her craft.

EVA. O sir, no riddles, pray !

OWEN. Then briefly thus—you must not see him, lady,
Before he dies.

EVA. Not see him ! wherefore not ?
By heaven, I will not have it so ! you mock me !
Respect the feelings of a woman, sir !
O, this is too much ! O my heart—my heart !

OWEN. Believe me, lady, I am sorry for you !
I would my tongue were branded to the roct
For such foul news !

EVA. This cruelty is wanton !
The fiercest tyrant will not grudge his victims
The pious luxury of a last farewell ;
These tears of mine, are they forbidden too ?
I do hut weep for my depravity
In being born a woman.—O, forgive me !
I am wild with grief—I know not what I say ;
But in all gentleness I'll beg of you
As though you were my father, and I lay
Dying, but all incapable of death
Till my last wish were granted—dear my friend,
May I not pnt my arms about his neck
And hold him to my breast one moment more ?
I promise you I will not say a word,
Nor lift an eyelid, no, nor shed a tear !
O, sir, be kind to me ! my heart is breaking !
Ah, if you were a maiden, I would pray you
By all the mysteries of our sisterhood,
The sacred yearnings of our sex, the hosoms
That hunger for the babe, the love we live on,—
And you would yield, I know !

OWEN. That were a kindness
Keener than steel ! Bethink you, dear my lady,
With what a torrid and tumultuous passion
Our Ernest loves—he is combustible ;

And if one spark should chance to light upon him
Out of those eyes of yours, that shine through tears
Like the eternal stars 'twixt fleeting showers,
Then all were lost! the fury of wild love
Would burn and blind him, and consume in ashes
Honor and resolution, manliness
And all the blossoms of a dying virtue
That we have watered with our tears, and sheltered
From storm and summer. Will you serve him so?
Or would you hear the harsh and hideous laughter
Of madness issuing from those lips, whose kisses
Have sown the rose a hundred happy times
About your cheek? Ah, then forbear, sweet lady!

EVIL. Why, you are right; I pray you pardon me! —
Beyond the Styx I'll meet him, and will take
Sweet vengeance for this harshness; he shall feel
The kisses of a god, ambrosial,
Fresh as Elysian dawns. Pray you go,
And say to Ernest, I am well, and send him
This lock of hair—he used to praise my hair;
And look you take this message, word for word:
“Fear not that I shall falter; on the shore
I stand and wave my kerchief, wishing you
Good voyage, and a quiet port.”

OWEN.

I go;

And may the heavens have pity on your head!

(Exit.)

EVIL. O all you gentle and immortal spirits
My sisters, who have suffered, and do know
How hard a thing it is to love and lose,
Pity me! let me feel your hands in mine!
Turn the white freshness of your young sweet faces

Blent with the starbeams on me ! whisper peace
 In these cool evening breezes !—What is this ?
 I am distraught with grief—'tis a true saying,
 “ Whom God would overthrow, he frenzies first ! ”
 I will not pray, until the howling winds
 Come at my whistle ! Wife of ancient Job !
 In my bereavement I am sib to you ;
 I could curse God and die ; this curdling sorrow
 Makes atheists out of maids.
 O Love ! O Hope ! ye are but captive birds
 That pipe and prune your plumes an hour or two ;
 But when your gentle hearts are fain to fare
 Forth to the fields and woods and airy ways,
 Ye break your wings against the unseen bars
 Of destiny, and die !

(Exit.)

SCENE II.—*Library in ERNEST's mansion, as before. Enter ERNEST, who advances to the windows.*

ERNEST. 'Tis a fair night ; a proper night to die in !

Cool, clear ; the ivory bosoms of the moon
 Cleave the white clouds with as divine a dawn
 As when Actæon spied their snowy shapes
 Bare in the bath ; but not for ever more
 Shall I contemplate from these quiet seats
 The splendid gloom of summer nights, the glory
 Of the white moon, the rush and hush of ocean,
 The sunset's rosy isles, the rainbow's laughter,
 Nor hear the lark salute the dew-sprent feet
 Of April dawns that walk on violets.
 Well ! I have earned my grave, as other men
 Earn food and raiment.

Enter OWEN.

Quick ! what says my love ?

OWEN. This is her answer, as she bade me bear it:

“Go say to Ernest, I am well, and send him

“This lock of hair—he used to praise my hair;

“And look you take this message, word for word;

“Fear not that I shall falter; on the shore

“I stand and wave my kerchief, wishing you

“Good voyage, and a quiet port.”

ERNEST.

Sweet girl!

By God, she is a ransom for the world,

A gage against the very realm of heaven!

And I a canting rogue, a clod, unworthy

To kiss her heel! So, lie thou there, sweet spoil

Of yonder stricken dove!

(Putting the hair into his bosom.)

OWEN.

Believe me, friend,

She shall not lack a brother, while the heart

Beats in this breast of mine! 'Tis growing late;

If there be aught of service I can do you,

Commend it to me now; I must depart.

I read the resolution in your eyes;

I'll not enquire your purpose. Good be with you!

Good-bye, my boy!

ERNEST.

Good-bye! good-bye, old fellow!

(Exit OWEN.)

“Good voyage!”

Not “*Au revoir!*”—that is but sorry cheer!

Yet she is right; the man that looks for nothing

Counts as clear profit all that fortune sends;

Hope is a shifting and mercurial spirit,—

Mercurial in his lies and in his heels—

I will not trust him for a pennyworth

Unless he brings his money in his hand. -

So let it be "good voyage;" let me think
That I am launched upon a lonely ocean,
Bound where the winds may drive me, and foredoomed
Never again to see the cliffs of home,
Nor the white kerchief of my own true love
Fluttering adown the beach.

Sometimes I dream of immortality
And such high themes, while the great organ thunders
Beneath I know not what aerial feet
That make the solemn keys their stepping-stones
From sweet Elysian meadows golden-shored;
Or when I view yon dome of empyrean,
Whose vast magnificence of spanless height
Dwarfs the ecliptic to a clothier's yard:
But though I dream, illusion is my foe;
Mine is a brain that fancies cannot feed;
And so I feel no comfortable staff
To succor me along the Stygian vale;
Yet I am fearless—should I fear to sleep?

—Hold there! to sleep? how know I whether death
Be sleep or waking? "fear to *sleep*," quoth I!
That's a most vile petition of the question;
All's one for that! what, should I fear the rack,
The flayer's knife, the thumbscrew, the slow fire,
Or all the tortures of the Holy Office?
I fear no mortal nor immortal thing
Save one, dishonor—which I vanquish now
For ever! for if any spark of soul
Survive my breath, no dark and sordid lantern
Confines it more—unsullied as the stars
Behold it burn, invulnerable as air!
—But if I be extinguished, body and soul,

What need I fear ? the jangle of the forum,
The clashing arms of mighty states, the roar
Of the world's stithy, and the plaintive lowings
Of this poor patient herd of humankind,
Shall never pierce my turfy canopy,
Nor shake the pillows where my head shall rest
Among the germins of sweet living things
That aye renew the world, nor fright the cattle
From grazing o'er me, nor make pale the flowers
That my sweet Eva——
There, there's the sting of it ! this pays for all !
'Tis like the parting of the flesh and skin
To quit thee thus, my girl !

Peace ! no more dallying !

(Unlocks cabinet, produces bottle of poison, out of which he fills a glass.)

O ye infernal and malicious powers,
Step-fathers of mankind, whose cruel care
Howls in the tempest, hurls the pestilence,
Lays bare the nerve of agony and tears
And fills the hungry mouth with evil things !
The game of chess that you and I are waging
Draws to a close ; the bird of victory
Perches with you—my forces are dissolved
Before your onslaught—I have scarce a pawn
To guard my standard—but I scorn to yield !
What ! I am English ! I ignore defeat !
Postpone your pæans—I have one more move—
Stale-mate !

(Drinks off the poison.)

Now clear the board ! in other worlds

We'll try the fortunes of the game anew ;
There lies my gage !

(Hurting glass to the floor.)

Aha ! my medicine works !

(Reels and falls heavily in a swoon. Enter OWEN and EVA, who raise him and lay him upon a couch ; he recovers consciousness, and exit OWEN.)

ERNEST. What, Eva, is it thou ?

EVA. Yes, dear, 'tis I.

ERNEST. Poor widowed maiden mine ! thy radiant sweetness
And simple mildness made thy presence ever
Like the soft splendor of unclouded skies
Emerging after showers ; but O fair morning,
I am the black and boisterous thundercloud
That overcasts thy brightness with a pall
Funereal, flinging tears upon thy face !
Forgive me, dear !

EVA. O Ernest ! do not say so !
What have I to forgive ? I love you always !
Must I forgive my eyes when they do ache ?
I suffer with you, dearest !

ERNEST. Thanks, sweet heart !
Bend down your head a little ! let me see
Or think I see your eyes. Yes, I am going ;
Pray you, another kiss before I die !
For us there waiteth in this world of earth
No bridal torch, no clasp of wedded arms,
No voice of children at the fireside knees ;
Breaks at my feet the ocean—I shall sail
To that wan world, obscure as destiny,
Wherein our fathers rest ; and it may be
Some subtle alchemy shall blend anew
The elements of my soul, and I shall change

To something other than I am, and lacking
Memory and love of thee, and stony-cold
To thy sweet kisses ; and between us two
Perchance no love shall be for evermore.
So kiss me while my lips are warm ! Good-bye !
Is this your hand ?

CURTAIN.



SAMSON IN CHAINS.

SAMSON IN CHAINS.

STAND from before me, woman !

I cannot see thee, but I feel thy presence
Darkening the sunshine ; there is not another
In the wide world, whose motion and whose breath
Could thrill me thus. What hast thou come to see ?
A blind man ? in the streets of Ascalon
Are many such, slow moving at the heels
Of dogs a hundredfold more true than women ;
Go to, bestow thy pity upon strangers,
Not upon one that loathes thee !

Didst thou think

That I was longing for that lap of thine
To lay my head in, and to fall asleep
To the soft modulations of thy voice
Murmuring, perchance, that lullaby thou lovest,
“ Up, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson ! ”

Return ! thy husband has no home for thee ;
These prison walls are bare of Tyrian hangings,
And this poor pallet lacks a canopy
Fit for thy delicate magnificence.
But if thou cravest homely cheer and welcome
Go thou to Zorah, to my father's house,
And seek the poor old man, whose aged lips
Have kissed thee like a daughter many a time ;
Seek him, I say ; thou needst not travel far ;

His feet are all too feeble to be straying ;
Behold him where he sits among his lambs
Upon the homestead hills, in the sweet shadow
Of some green sycamore, and with dim eyes
(Soon to be sightless as these empty sockets)
Peers forth upon the sunshine, quavering
Some song of Israel's deeds, but in himself
Calling to mind the likeness of his child,
His only son, the darling of his heart,
Who as he deems is haply in the field
Smiting the foes of Israel hip and thigh ;
Then steal thou on his musings ; do not fear !
He will be glad to see thee ; his cold hands
Will wander through the curls of thy dark hair
Most fatherly ; then will he ask for tidings
Of his dear son, whether he comes or no ?
—How wilt thou answer him ? thou wilt not dare
To tell him, while he clings about thy neck,
That Samson lies in a Philistine prison,
Shorn of his lion-locks, his eye-balls reft,
Not beaten in fair field, but basely sold
By thee, his wife ?

O Dalila, I loved thee
As I did love my sight ! thou wast to me
More than my people or their ancient faith,
Dearer than mine own mother, for all these
Cried out upon me when I took to wife
Thee, a Philistine and a worshipper
Of Dagon, the quaint god whose fishy shape
The ships of Ashdod bear upon their prows ;
But I was rioting in the first fine flush
Of generous love, and jested at their prayers—

—The worse for me! I was beside myself!
What could I think to find in a Philistine
But hissing treachery?

Yet I did love thee
O Dalila,^f thou know'st! and I have deemed—
When I did hold thee fast in mine embrace,
And thou with thy soft fingers rosy-stained
Didst gently put aside my fell of hair,
And laugh, and kiss the scars upon my face—
That thou didst love me too; but O, my wife,
Woe's me, thou didst not love me! thou the while
Wert murmuring "Now the silly sturgeon bites!
What sport it is! he cannot hold out long!
O Dagon, what a noble sacrifice
I bring to thee!"—Thou liedst in thy throat!
There's not a man in the Philistines' country
Can tie me to the altar of yon reptile!
I serve the God of Israel!

And for thee,
Think not that thou hast earned a lofty name
Among the patriot women that aforetime
Subdued by pious arts their country's foes;
No, for I am thy husband! the young child,
Fruit of my loins, that must be born to thee,
Shall curse thee for his father, and refuse
To suck thy bloody nipples; to all time
Thou shalt be infamous among thy sex,
Darling of harlots, scorn of all pure women;
And men shall say, of maidens that deceive,
"False as the wife of Samson, who betrayed
Her husband to the foe!"

My Dalila,

I hear thee weeping ; do not so, my wife !
Take it not thus to heart ; I spoke too harshly ;
By God, I love thee still ! Come hither, sweetheart !
There is a sovereign virtue in my kisses
To cure these bitter sobs. What hair thou hast !
Softer than water ; I can almost feel
The color come and go upon thy cheeks ;
Thou hast that perfume on thy kerchief yet ?
I like it well. Why, so ! thou answerest cheerly ;
I know that thou art laughing in thy heart
To see how tame I am ; thou dost not love me ;
Laugh on, my beauty ! I am well content
To hold thee thus, and feel thy light caresses,
Though they be falser than the wiles of Jacob
Who stole his brother's blessing.

But for these

Thy countrymen, my foes—the Lord reward them !—
I have defiance only, and a hatred
Incurable as blindness ; let them kill me,
Or, by my head, I shall arise in fury
And smite them with a slaughter fifty-fold
Greater than that of Lehi, when I thirsted
For water, like a woodman spent with hewing ;
My locks are lusty ; they will stream anew
Like the black cedars upon Lebanon ;
Then let them look to it ! the girls of Gaza
Shall have enow of the Philistine purple
To dye their kirtles for a hundred harvests !
Despair and Vengeance, keen and hungry dogs,
Shall snuff me out the quarry, and conduct me

With bloody strings—

—What ? who is this that dares

To pluck my beard ! uncircumcised barbarian,

Get hence before I make my spring and show thee

Whether the bees build honey in my mouth !

—Give me a nettle or a wheaten straw

That I may beat this whipster into bran !

Stand back, I say !

APRIL 13, 1877.

ODES. BOOK I.

I. TO IOLE.

NOVEMBER winds are wailing, and the meadows *g*
Are nibbled by the frost ; the naked trees
Shorn of their leafy draperies
Project attenuated shadows.

Or if perchance an aged leaf still lingers,
Ragged it hangs, and russet as a toad,—
Spoil'd of the autumn hues that glow'd
Mellow as morning's golden fingers.

The summer birds repose in summer's bosom,
The butterflies are gone, and in the bowers
Where blush'd of late a thousand flowers,
Scarce blows a solitary blossom.

And mothers by the midnight hearths are sighing
For sailor sons upon the stormy seas,
And many a maiden on her knees
To unrelenting skies is crying.

The months are mad, for wintertime is over !
Comest thou not, O friend, from the fair East,
Bearing the lilies on thy breast
And redolent of thyme and clover ?

No need of summer suns, now thou art present ;
The wild winds lie ; it is the mildest May ;
With daisy-stars the fields are gay ;
The woods and dewy lanes are pleasant

With hawthorn breezes; the young lambs are playing
 Blithe on the grass; the cuckoo is about;
 Lilacs and chestnut-blooms are out,
 And rosy blossom-clouds are swaying
 Among fresh leaves; and look, the lark is winging
 To crimson skies warm with the morning's kiss,
 And frenzied with melodious bliss
 High in the heavens I hear him singing.

NOVEMBER, 1875.

II. TO IOLE.

Lo the gods hate us, and the fiery feet
 Of Nemesis pursue us, pausing never;
 And o'er the noontide radiance ever
 Comes cloud, and sourness after sweet!

No shrine we tend; to nought of heaven we pray;
 No altar glows with incense of our burning;
 And so the slighted gods are turning
 Their vengeful thunderbolts this way.

Should Fortune guide us into smoother seas,
 And thou and I and sunshine dwell together,
 Megæra tugs our slackening tether,
 And like the dreadful Destinies

Thy suitors come. One blows an amorous flute,)¹
 Another coughs with querulous iteration;
 One sits in stony adoration
 Meekly and mercifully mute.

Accursed race ! The fair Danäides
Had reason ; and for me, I drain a beaker
Of ruby-red Falernian liquor
To their immortal memories.

NOVEMBER 11, 1875.

III. TO PAN.

O son of Chaos, hush thy plaintive reeds !
Thy leopard-skin is warm ; why art thou fain
To taste ambrosia, and on purple stars
Pillow thy head ? thy hoofs and shaggy knees
Were fitter for the stall ; content thyself :
The heavens already have their Capricorn. .

Far in the caves of ocean Echo dwells,
Or pois'd a-tiptoe on the eagle's crag,
Or couch'd with Iris in the silver hair
Of some wild waterfall ; pursue her not :
Her pure aerial essence may not mix
With aught that smells of earthly ; cease, O Pan !

Wilt thou contend in melody with him,
The bright-hair'd son of Leto ? dost thou dare
With miserable straws to counterfeit
The deathless music of the golden lyre
Of him that leads the chorus of the stars ?
Depart, and roll with Midas in the hay !

What meanest thou to let thy goatish heart
Heave unto bursting, and the foolish tears
Plough thine ancestral cheeks ? wilt thou assuage

The inexorable fates ? or will thy throes
Aid thee to climb the cold Olympian heights ?
Leave weeping ; crop the clover and be still !

Take to thyself a wife of the she-goats,
And spurn her not ; at home in Arcady
They love thee ; there the meads of asphodel
And saffron are, soft to the flying feet
Of thy sweet nymphs and thee ; nor shalt thou spare
To crush the cluster'd nipples of the vine.

Hymettus hath his flowers, nor Hybla less,
Fresh, honey-spilling ; under the thick trees
The grass is cool, and cool the glassy stream
That mocks Narcissus with his darling's eyes ! &
The winds are balm ; and on the sunny slopes
The goats thy fellows browse and bask and sleep.

NOVEMBER 23, 1875.

IV. AD URBEM ET ORBEM.

THE grace of audience ! It is glorious weather ;
The hemisphere of heaven is one clear vase
Blown out of pure and violet ether ;
It is the pearl of winter days.

The steely surface of the lake is ruffled
With undulations fine as pencill'd hairs ;
And though the streamlet's voice is muffled,
And sober weeds the landscape wears,

Yet something of the summer's bloom is haunting
The fluted pillars of the Palisades,
And homely hawthorn-trees are flaunting
In scarlet down the sombre glades.

It is the sacrosanct and solemn season
Of Thanksgiving—and they that list may pray ;
But they shall show me better reason
Ere I do thank the gods this day.

Though like a candidate the heavens are beaming
With brows of morning mildness blossom-blue,
And warm the sunny rays are streaming,
And Nature condescends to woo,

I am not grateful ; I accept the present
As some slight recompense for injuries past ;
This temper of the skies is pleasant—
But I have borne the bitter blast

And shiver'd in the snow. Must I be grateful
Hound-like, for happiness which is my right ?
Fawn and lick hands for every plateful ?
Have I not suffer'd ? By this light

I swear the heavens are in my debt, and deeply !
Women may kneel, and men of meeker mood ;
I do not sell my thanks so cheaply :
Nor, had I cause for gratitude,

Would I adore a mute mysterious essence,
Nor glorify the lightnings and the skies,
Nor bow before a muffled presence ;
I ply my trade with open eyes.

But when I find a fair and gentle creature
Like Iole, for ever warm and sweet,
With all the homage of my nature
I kiss the ground before her feet.

What ho ! a bowl of Cæcuban, good fellow,
And ripe and rosy let the vintage be !
Let's taste your brew ; ay so—'tis mellow !
Now, friends, a bumper !—" Iole ! "

NOVEMBER, 1875.

V. TO NEÆRA.

SIREN of sixteen summers, whose bright eyes
Shoot sunbeams from beneath their feathery fringes ;
Whose brow and cheek the rich blood tinges
With crimson as of sunset skies,

Cease ! I am ware of each enchanting wile ;
Vainly for me thy nut-brown eyes are glowing,
In vain the Punic rose is blowing
About the dimples of thy smile.

I know thee fickle as I deem thee fair ;
Unmov'd I hear thy limpid laughs ringing,
Or view thee o'er thy shoulders flinging
Billows of hyacinthine hair.

Breakers ahead !—That heaving heart of thine
Rings hollow to the strokes of sweet emotion,
For thou art pitiless as the ocean,
And bitter as the barren brine.

In vain—ah gods, what means this agony ?

Ho, brothers, bind me fast ! my force is failing !

Pull, merry men all ! I would be sailing

The waters of a shallower sea.

JANUARY, 1876.

VI. TO MYSELF.

FIVE lustres, O myself, are now no more

Since first thy mother launch'd thee in the world,

And still, with idle pinions furl'd,

Thy bark is moor'd beside the shore.

What doest thou ? behold, the world is large ;

Cathay, Cipango, and the kingdoms old

Of Zengis, have of pearl and gold,

And cool by Arethusa's marge

The iris waves ; about Soracte's crests

Trail the lush vines, and by Circassian streams

The maids are lovelier than thy dreams,

With rosy arms and swan-soft breasts.

Arise ; emerge ; unruffled is the sleep

Of ocean ; thee the winds and waters call ;

Mayst hear the Tritons one and all

Dancing a hundred fathom deep.

Throw off that Stoic mantle ! flesh and blood

Have no philosophy ; learn of the swine !

Maidens and music, verse and wine,

Laughter and love, alone are good.

What though the gods are deaf, and Destiny
 Stony of brow, and Fortune hides her smile ?
 Thou hast the present all the while :
 Surely it is enough for thee

To dip thy fingers in Leuconœ's hair ;
 Pluck the full moment ! quaff the golden hours,
 Not without laughter ! scatter flowers,
 And hold afar the feet of Care !

Nor do thou shun the flowing Cæcuban,
 Nor spurn—'tis Christmastide—the mistletoe ;
 Troll us a catch, Malvolio,
 And quit the part of Puritan !

Look ! there is Laura with her tresses down ;
 Follow her ! she is fair, and not so coy !
 Why, this is brave ! Here's luck, my boy !
 I know the maiden will not frown.

JANUARY, 1876.

VII. EROTIC.

COURAGE, O mateless man, despis'd and rejected of women !
 Courage ! the halls of thy heart shall thrill to the touch of a
 footstep.

Ay, she will come in the flesh, the dream-seen beautiful maiden ;
 Ay, she will come, she will come ; I scent her afar as the clover.
 Through the ignoble crowd her white feet glimmer, I know it !
 Over the mountain, down the ravine, she is dawning, I feel it !

Ay, though I know her not, though her eyes are hidden in
shadow,

Though the sweet sound of her voice never yet stole into my
slumber,

Somewhere in orient lands first-kiss'd of the Mps of the morn-
ing,

Somewhere among the woods that blaze with splendors of
evening

Still she abides ; but straight as a bee to the heart of the
blossom,

True as a dove to her nest, young Love shall bring her beside
me,

Blushful, morning-red, with broken luminous glances
Flashing and falling and flashing like interrupted music,

Tresses honey-bright, like sunny stretches of water,
Leaping and laughing between the primrose hills of her
bosom !

Hasten, love ; for like as the earth desireth the spring-time,
Like as the beggar fire, so hunger I for thy presence !

Ha ! the meadow-flowers unclothe them, hitherward gazing !
What is this ? I hear a whisper, a step on the threshold—

MAY, 1876.

VIII. AT RANDOM.

AHA ! the clouds have taken wing ;
Save here and there a snowy stray,
That flits, a slight and callow thing,
Across the forehead of the day.

Pan pipes autumnal everywhere,
And, with a thyrsus dipp'd in wine,
Dashes the tree-tops here and there—
The maple flushes, and the vine

Fires, and the lusty lifeblood glances
Through yonder oak-tree's veined hands,
And like a smoke the poplar dances
Above the chesnut's burning brands.

To-day is like an open flower
Whose breast I feed at like a bee ;
What, boy ! we'll snatch the golden hour ;
The gods have made this day for thee.

O you divine Olympian chorus,
We thank you, since you deign at last
To set so fair a feast before us ;
Bravi ! we will forgive the past.

What's this ? a flower ! in far October !
Hush ! we may find, if we have luck,
Some fairy Bardolph, scarce yet sober,
With charcoal beard, the gift of Puck,

Or some belated Oberon
That flirted overlong last night,
Who hides him inch-deep from the sun
And whistles loud to drown his fright.

The time invites ; we will recline
On this dry turf, beneath the shade
Of yon blood-red Virginian vine :
But O that here we had a maid !

Neæra say, or rosy Myrrha,
Or shy sweet Hero—modest flower ;
Ripe Lalage, or fair-haired Pyrrha,
Whose gipsy hat hides all her dower.

Or Margaret, with her plummy lashes
And eyes in ambush darting doom ;
Or saucy Kate, whom nought abashes ;
Or Clara with her wine-dark bloom :

Or Lilian with her waxen skin,
Red lips, and pretty pouting speech,
And that soft-moulded cloven chin
In shape and color like the peach.

What ! play the Timon to your guest,
Ye gods ? and mingle sour with sweet ?
Beshrew me ! 'tis a sorry jest
To serve the sauce without the meat !

OCTOBER 8, 1876.

IX. TO FORTUNE.

THOU liest, Fate ! I'll not submit,
 Pent thus, to grind an alien corn
 For ever ; I shall rise and sit,
 Dew-laden, on the wings of morn !

Ay, drive your screws and rivets tauter,
 And forge the cauldron like a flint !
 But look you, I am boiling water,
 And I shall rend your bands like lint !

OCTOBER 20, 1876.

X. TO LEUCONŒ.

HERE comes Leuconœ in her snowy kirtle,
 Her bosom heaving like a wind-whipt sea,
 Her milky brows entwin'd with myrtle,
 Her soft arms free.

Fair maiden, let me speak as your physician ;
 Those rosy pulses are a thought too warm—
 —Hush, lady ! let me do my mission ;
 I mean no harm ;

But hide the swellings of that fond emotion,
 For *he* is here ; you must not let him know
 What furrows in your young heart's ocean
 His breath can blow.

NOVEMBER 5, 1876.

XI. TO A YOUNG WRITER.

I LIKE Laconian utterances, young man !

Give me good carrying coin, not silver-foil

Thin as a shadow, woven coil on coil,

Nor minted moonshine sparkling spick-and-span.

These cowries, current with the scribes of news,

What are they worth ? a shilling for a sack

Heavy enough to break the Titan's back !

Words have a value ; put them out at use.

New-made and barbarous words do not befit

A scholar's lips ; the rapid quill runs red

With blood that oozes from poor Priscian's head ;

And much quotation marks a barren wit.

Spare us the trite ; hide with a decent veil

Your itch of moralizing, or at most

Expose it to your wife ; who plays the host

Offends in offering dainties that are stale.

Speak the king's English only ; leave to fools

And mountebanks their motley ; fiddlestick

For all your tawdry tinsel rhetoric !

What should a workman do with gilded tools ?

Yet show a taste in phrases ; please our ears

With sound, but let your lutestrings never creak ;

Be brief ; and have a care you do not speak

The tongue of aldermen and auctioneers.

JANUARY 8, 1877.

XII. TO SLEEP.

COME from the hornèd moon, O merciful,
And move about the chamber where she lies—
Not silently, but with a pleasant sound
Of wings and flowing garments ; wind thine arms
Round her, and lay the cool soft cheek of thee
Against her like a babe upon the breast.

What, art thou unacquainted with the good
And pitiless to the pure ? canst thou behold
This daisy drooping with her petals wide,
Unvisited by the dews, untouch'd of thee,
Without compassion ? when didst thou become
The handmaid of the dark Eumenides ?

Ah, turn thy shining footsteps, gracious one,
Thitherward ; breathe the clover and the rose ;
Weave all the finer spells of melody
About her ; let her dreams be light and sweet,
Sown with kind faces and clear golden days
And waters musical among the reeds.

JANUARY 17, 1877.

XIII. TO PHŒBUS APOLLO.

O God, have pity and enfranchise me !
Hast thou forgotten me, my God, my God ?
Dost thou behold me how this many a year
I am become a scrivener for my bread,
Spite of the rainbow-scarf that marks me thine,
Begotten of thy glory and mens' tears ?

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But thou, thy lyre and lustre laid aside,
 Still as thine own white statue, and as cold
 As thy less lovely sister, sleepest fast,
 Couch'd in the shadow of a summer cloud,
 Lull'd by the babble of the ferny rills,
 The sea-like sighing of Dodonian oaks.

What have I done ? what have I spar'd to do,
 That thou so scornest me ? dost thou require
 Fasting and flagellation, and the sound
 Of orisons and vespers in thy praise ?
 So be it if thou wilt ; but, O my God,
 Give me a cittern and my liberty !

Arise, and aim afar one sunny shaft
 Against this heart of mine, and lay me low !
 And as to sedgy Simöis thou didst bear
 The slain Sarpedon, soil'd with battle-sweat,
 So bear me hence, O God, and let me sleep
 Beside the lily-pools of Castaly !

Ah, thy Parnassus, God, is hard to climb !
 And I should quit my staff and sandal-shoon
 For ever, and forego the laurel crown,
 Had I not now and then the grace to hear
 Beyond the morning tops thy golden lyre
 Sounding unutterable symphonies.

MAY 1, 1877.

(*Second stanza suppressed.*)

XIV. TO O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

TELL me, Octavius (for I seek a sign)
Where dost thou find this gentle God of thine ?
Under the veil of what mysterious waters,
Or couch'd in what soft shadows of the vine ?

Pent in what pearly prison lingers he
Of all the silver shells that line the sea ?
Or in what steeple-corner is he spinning,
The innumerable web of destiny ?

Clings he like Ariel to the cool white breast
Of some fair lily far from human quest,
While with the quaint sweet carols of the flower-folk
His meadow-mother sings him to his rest ?

Poor little godling ! doth he live or die ?
Quick, call the surgeons ! haply they shall spy
His breath upon the mirror of the ocean,
Or light upon him as they probe the sky.

I find him not ; that other face I find,
—God's, if you will, but female of its kind,—
Capricious as a bird, glorious as morning,
Fierce as a wolf, and fickle as the wind.

We all do know and hate her ; she hath flung
Smiles at us, and her lips to ours have clung,
—Then, presto ! she hath toss'd us in her talons
And roll'd us writhing on her cruel tongue.

She holds the thunder ; let your God beware,
 Or she will drag him trembling from his lair,
 And send him with a posy to her minion
 Or bind him for a bauble in her hair.

For me, I hear the people groan and curse,
 I see the world slide on from worse to worse,
 Whilst like a fly your tiny God is riding
 Upon the car-wheels of the universe.

Cry, cry aloud ! hath he not answer'd thee ?
 Gash thee, and cry ! a mighty God is he ;
 Cry, and spare not ! his aged eyes are weary,
 He drives the deer, or pukes, or ploughs the sea.

In what Plutonian cave or Idrian mine
 Hides he his head, this gracious God of thine ?
 What, must we bait him with a mouse's morsel,
 Or angle for him with a rod and line ?

SEPTEMBER 6, 1877.

XV. IN PRAISE OF LUCRETIA.ⁱ

WHOM the gods destine for Lucretia's hand
 Shall have the hap of him that springs at dawn
 Into the golden chariot of the sun
 With Eo. From the meadows of the morn
 Radiant they rise, and all her honey'd hair
 Floats, dropping dewy light ambrosial,
 About him ; backward far the veil of night
 Rolls thick with stars, and like a babe the earth
 Looks up and laughs ; nor in the rosy rack

Linger they long, but with a steady pole
Emerging, on the open sward of sky
They move majestic, and beneath their wheels
Ablaze the saffron springs ; about them go
The maiden Hours with song : so to the top
Of the meridian's hill they climb, and thence
Point for the gates of eve ; the earth is glad
Because of them, and of their bounteous hands
Scattering the seeds of good ; nor less the joy
Within the breast of these, who know themselves
Workers of weal ; for them the ocean waits
Unruffled, spreading wide his gracious arms,
And not without the gods they sink to sleep.

But he that laps him in Lycoris' arms
Mounts in the selfsame car with other hap
When Phæthon, rash boy, is at the reins.
The high clouds flame above him, and the East
Frowns boding ; the black thunder broods afar,
Low-growling in the leash ; but heeding not,
He smites with untried whip his noble steeds
Erst virgin of the lash—they with a plunge
Rake ope the bowels of heaven, and out of doors
The sulphurous lightning springs, and into space
Hurls the wreck'd chariot, and a great eclipse
Snuffs out the glimmering day ; the golden wheels
Start from their axles, and like falling stars
Flash downward through the mirk ; but he, the boy,
—Torn from his place, and screaming like a bird—
Clings yet with aching and distorted arm
To the taut reins, that into fiery snakes
Change in his grasp, and round his blackening throat

Wind them like whips—then heels he down, down, down,
Interminably down, while at his ear
Alecto howls, and half to the crackling heavens
Leaps the huge ocean with a hungry roar.

NOVEMBER 6, 1877.

XVI. UNENTITLED.

THIS night I dreamt of her. O damnèd Fate,
Why wilt thou heap these injuries on my head?
By God, 'tis base to mock me thus with shadows,
That come with Tantal-kisses to my bed,
And eyes that smile too late!

Why didst not grant me an o'erflowing purse,
Lies, and a knavish heart, and let me be?
Then might I gather in the goodliest meadows,
But there's no wage for honest probity
Save court'sies and a curse!

NOVEMBER 13, 1877, 4 A.M.

XVII. TO AULUS JULIUS RUFUS.

WHEN shall I have thee here again, my boy,
To push the pieces on the blazon'd board?
Dost thou not kindle with a martial joy,
And thirst to see the blood of pawns outpour'd?

Still stand the old St. George's spires, and still
Clangs the loud clock the unconscionable hours
That thou and I, my friend, were wont to fill
With clash of arms, and shock of hostile powers.

Some Vandal hand, alas, hath lopp'd the boughs
Of those fair willows that erewhile did wave
Athwart the road ; but what ! we'll drink a rouse !
Come, boy, and earn a triumph or a grave !

Dost thou remember that historic night
When, while thy fortunes were at point of wreck,
Thy queen decoy'd me by a Parthian flight,
Then turn'd and foil'd me with ' perpetual check ? '

Or how in one fierce fight (it was, methinks,
An Evans Gambit) I had found a way
To sever one by one your army's links,
When, calling a brief truce, we left the fray

To pour libations unto Father Jove,
Who heard your prayers, insidious ! for to you
He gave the forging of that mighty move
That overpaid the debt of Waterloo.

Yet not without my trophies I have warr'd,
And many an ivory foeman have I slain
Upon the squares of yonder chequer'd sward ;
Ay, and I dare thee to the lists again !

My knights and yeomen, stout and stubborn fighters,
Do snuff the battle, couching lance in rest ;
My bishops dance the Pyrrhic in their mitres ;
My castles lift an unabated crest.

My queen is pensive ; sure, she is in love
With some sly Theseus of thine amorous horde ;
We may not part them thus. There lies my glove !
Come, and I'll prove thee traitor with my sword !

NOVEMBER 15, 1877.

XVIII. TO A TERMINAL HEAD OF APOLLO.

O God the golden-hair'd, how like a spy
 Thou settest thee beside my threshing-floor,
 And with a glance of thine imperious eye
 Stayest my steps, when I would fain explore
 The fertile continents of Poesy!

That frown becomes not thine immortal brow,
 Cynthia! what, art thou Terminus indeed?
 Wink, wink, I pray thee, whilst I turn my plough
 About the corners of yon sunny mead!
 These ancient bards, God wot, have room enow.

Shakespeare's broad acres, boundless as the main,
 One plot of breezy pasture well might spare;
 And Horace would not grudge a rood or twain
 Of his fat Tusculan fields and vineyards fair,
 Nor Chaucer stint his sheaves of golden grain.

Who hath espous'd the everlasting sea,
 The unpolluted air, the virgin moon?
 Who may pretend to a monopoly
 Of April violets, or the rose of June?
 Who dares restrain the poet's liberty?

—Thou?—softly, my good God! softly, I say!
 Thinkest thou, Phœbus, that I come to steal?
 Not so! I fain would use, as all men may,
 The public meadows of the commonweal;
 I claim no interest, but a right of way.

Can nothing move thee, silent sentinel ?

By Pollux ! Dis himself were not so stern !

I'll get an easier-going god—farewell !

Thy brother Mercury will serve my turn ;

He knows to smite the silver-stringèd shell.

NOVEMBER 20, 1877.

NOTES.

NOTES.

a. On the play of "Ernest."

This drama is not intended for the stage in its present shape. No modern audience would endure the long monologues and dialogues of the first and fifth acts, unrelieved as they are by dramatic incident ; but with judicious excision the piece might possibly be adapted for representation. On the other hand, some of the lighter prose scenes, which may appear feeble or trivial to the reader in his cabinet, would create a better impression when acted upon the boards by players experienced in their art.

b. "Tit-o-reen"—wren ; "bull-french"—bull-finch. These words are from the peasants' dialect of Somersetshire.

c. "Glory de John." Our friend John probably means *Gloire de Dijon*, a fine variety of rose.

d. "I had a dream, etc." This was an actual dream of the author's.

e. It is to be noticed that according to English law Owen and Eva, had they a real existence, would by their behavior in this scene lay themselves open to indictment as accessories to murder. So much for the wisdom of our ancestors !

f. I have followed Milton's spelling and pronunciation of the word Dalila, although not without misgivings.

g. "November winds are wailing," &c.

I have invented this metre (which appears, with modifications, in several of the odes) with the intention of reproducing the general effect of the Alcaics so dear to Horace. Quite recently, however, happening upon a volume of Professor Conington's Horace, I discovered that he had already constructed a very similar stanza in imitation of what is known as the Fifth Asclepiad—the metre of the *Quis multâ gracilis* and the


O fons Bandusiae. There is, however, a sufficiently marked distinction between Mr. Conington's metre and my own.

h. "That mocks Narcissus with his darling's eyes"—i. e. his sister's. According to the version of the myth which I prefer, Narcissus was a beautiful boy, the image of an only sister. She having died, Narcissus betook himself daily to a clear stream of water, wherein he might behold his sister's countenance reflected in his own; for which piety the gods transformed him into the flower which bears his name.

i. It has never been my fortune to read any of the descriptions of Phæthon's career which exist in the ancient poets. It is therefore not improbable that in this ode I may have unwittingly repeated the incidents and the imagery of earlier writers; in which case I have only my ignorance to plead. The same observation applies to almost all of my themes in the antique manner, the only exceptions, I think, being the ode To Næra and an unpublished piece, both of which may be called semi-imitations of Horace.

THE END.

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